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THE EARLY FICTION OF J.G.FARRELL
AS INFLUENCED BY THE WRITING OF ALBERT CAMUS,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO L'ÉTRANGER

Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
for the Open University
in the Discipline of Literature
in 2006

by

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ABSTRACT

The task of this study has been to show how French existentialist writing, in particular the novels and essays of Albert Camus, contributed to the early development of the unique voice of the writer J.G. Farrell, and provided themes, imagery and characterisation which eventually transferred to, and grew within his Empire fiction. By doing this, it also attempts to review the place of the early fiction in Farrell's work, and to draw that and the later novels towards a coherent whole.

The first chapter examines the links established by critics between Farrell and modern French writers, including Camus. Existentialist features found in his work, especially those from Camus' L'Étranger, are identified in Chapter 2. It is argued that, from these, Farrell derived elements central to all his work. Amongst such elements are the siege-metaphor, the pervading tone of comic irony and the figure of the outsider-protagonist.

Chapter 3 examines Farrell's 'outsiders', makes comparisons between these characters and the protagonist in L'Étranger, and shows how the 'outsider' develops in the early novels and is carried forward into the Empire fiction.

Death and disease as metaphors are discussed in Chapter 4, with particular reference to Camus' La Peste and L'Étranger. Some sources in Camus' work are suggested for the symbolical use of dogs in Farrell's novels, and for the doctor-figure featuring importantly in nearly all his work.

A specific type of death is dealt with in Chapter 5, where the central murder episode in L'Étranger, and its connection with both Farrell's life and his preoccupation with kinds of death on beaches, is explored.

In conclusion, this study argues that Farrell's early fiction and Camusian existentialist writing are very close, that concerns from both sources form a significant part of his Empire novels, and that a consideration of Camus' influence is a key to viewing Farrell's work as a single, developing entity rather than as two separate units.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	i
List of Abbreviations	v
Chapter 1. Introduction: The Empire Trilogy and the Early Novels, a Critical Survey	1
Chapter 2. Belief and Unbelief	28
Chapter 3. The 'Outsider' Image	57
Chapter 4. Disease and Death as Metaphors for the Collective Human Condition	95
Chapter 5. Death on a Beach	137
Conclusion	174
Notes to the Text	183
Bibliography	207

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used for the novels of J.G.Farrell and Malcolm Lowry, and for the novels and essays of Albert Camus:

J.G.Farrell

- AMFE A Man From Elsewhere (1963)
 TL The Lung (1965)
 AGITH A Girl in the Head (1967)
 T Troubles (1970)
 SK The Siege of Krishnapur (1973)
 SG The Singapore Grip (1978)
 THS The Hill Station (1981)

Albert Camus

- LE L'Étranger (1942)
 LMS Le Mythe de Sisyphe (1942)
 LP La Peste (1947)
 LHR L'Homme Révolté (1951)
 IC La Chute (1956)
 LPH Le Premier Homme (1994)

Malcolm Lowry

- UV Under the Volcano (1947)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE EMPIRE TRILOGY AND THE EARLY NOVELS, A CRITICAL SURVEY

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THE EMPIRE TRILOGY AND THE EARLY NOVELS,
A CRITICAL SURVEY

Much of the criticism of Farrell's work since his death in 1979 tends to regard him as a writer who produced two separate bodies of work; the first phase, between 1963 and 1967 saw the creation of the 'early novels'; in the second phase Farrell was working on an 'Empire' project from 1969 until his work was cut short by his death in 1979. The apparent watershed occurs for several reasons. In 1970, Farrell published Troubles and suddenly became a 'successful' writer, winning the Faber Memorial Prize and opening the doors to his next success, The Siege of Krishnapur; with this he won the Booker Prize and entry into the examinations syllabus text lists. From 1970 onwards he was perceived to be working on a major opus of three, possibly four novels with a coherent theme and important social and political ideas; there was the promise of something even greater to come. At this time, too, Farrell had

progressed from being a writer of contemporary novels into the more prestigious and now-flourishing category of authors of historical fiction, specifically postcolonial fiction. Farrell himself, securely established as the creator of the 'Empire Trilogy', appraised his earlier work as merely 'casting around' and, by contrast, saw the subject of his major novels, the decline of the British Empire, as the 'really interesting thing' to have happened in his lifetime. ¹

The weight of critical consideration, therefore, has been on the Empire novels, an attractively rich field for discussions of every kind. Two early and important commentaries appeared in the publication of Farrell's unfinished fragment, The Hill Station, offered as additions to the work of Farrell by John Spurling and Margaret Drabble. ² Spurling gives a fair account of each of the author's early novels, but the real energy and focus of his commentary is reserved for the trilogy and The Hill Station. Drabble briefly acknowledges Farrell's third novel, A Girl in the Head, as the possible starting point for the 'bizarre imagery' and 'ludicrous' and 'repulsive' moments in Troubles; but her appreciation is otherwise

dedicated to the Empire fiction. In 1983, Lars Hartveit began a series of narrowly-focussed articles relating to Farrell specifically as a writer of historical fiction.³ Margaret Scanlan, also, published her highly perceptive 'Rumors of War' at about this time, concentrating her comments on Farrell's Troubles.⁴ A comprehensive monograph by Ronald Binns, J.G. Farrell, appeared shortly after, in 1986. Binns looks at the life of Farrell and at the influence of other writers on his work. He also takes a chapter to discuss the first three novels and highlights some of the themes which, making their first appearance in the early fiction, are developed in the novels of the trilogy. The three subsequent chapters deal exclusively with Farrell's Empire work.⁵ A substantial section of Neil McEwan's 1987 survey of contemporary historical fiction places Farrell alongside five other writers, Anthony Burgess, Robert Nye, John Fowles, William Golding and Mary Renault. He links them through their view of the past whilst engaging 'present consciousness'. In doing so, he echoes Elizabeth Bowen's famous judgement, made in 1971, upon the recently-published Troubles: ' . . . [I]t is yesterday reflected in today's consciousness.'⁶

It is not until 1993, with the publication of

Anna Cichón's article on contemporary issues in Farrell's early novels and her subsequent, longer study of his fiction, appearing in 1993, that criticism pauses in its near-exclusive exploration of the Empire novels to wonder where the trilogy came from. ⁷

Cichón opens her argument in her article 'Politics, Ideology and Reality in J.G.Farrell's Early Novels' by suggesting that many of the 'formal and thematic concerns' of the Empire fiction were anticipated in the first three novels. Ronald Binns, Bernard Bergonzi and T.Winnifrith would agree thus far. ⁸ Cichón goes further; she insists that other aspects of Farrell's later work are also discernible in his earlier writings. These would include an exploration of social mechanisms, of the relationships between the individual and his environment, the presentation of reality through the personal experience of the protagonist and the combining of a sensitivity to period and place with a wide-ranging intellectual curiosity. She makes a brief reference to the influence of Existentialism on some 'background characters'; and she also notes that, although the early novels may not be historical, they all register the relationship between individual life and external reality (p.23).

A third of Cichón's substantial second study, 'The Realm of Personality and History. A Study of J.G. Farrell's Fiction', is given over to a consideration of character in the early novels. Though not directly alluding to existentialist influence, Cichón writes:

. . . [I]n Farrell's view human life is shaped by numerous internal and external forces . . . Since there are so many determinants which have an impact upon the characters, they perceive their existence as absurd, meaningless and futile. The view of the absurdity of life is the principle dominating the construction of the characters in the early novels. (p.48).

She argues that, although the early novels are focussed on psychological concerns and the trilogy is devoted to historical issues, there is a recognisable continuity of motifs in both groups of novels, particularly in Farrell's contemplation of human existence.

In 1997, two major studies of Farrell's work appeared, written by Ralph Crane and Jennifer Livett, and by Michael Prusse, both reflecting exhaustive research and both registering, in chapters exclusively devoted to the first three novels, the links between these and the later trilogy.⁹ Crane and Livett note

that the circular form of the first two novels reflects the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre. They also suggest that the 'pervasive sickness of the individual and collective human condition [is] reminiscent of Camus' (pp.45 f.). Prusse underlines the importance, (and the critical neglect), of the early narratives as 'they provide the key . . . to the novelist's attraction to a number of typical themes'; he regards them as 'necessary steps in . . . [Farrell's] writing career . . . ' (p.6). Reflecting upon the connection with the work of Albert Camus, he suggests that the links between Farrell's work and modern French literature 'should be investigated' (p.5).

In the early novels there is evidence of the influence of authors who were important in Farrell's own reading. Lavinia Greacen's biographical record suggests that some of these influences were profound. Amongst them are Malcolm Lowry, Vladimir Nabokov, Richard Hughes, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Mann and many French novelists, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Critics who have written at length on Farrell's work have all recognised the novelist's debt to these writers.

widely-ranging essays on Farrell's work, edited by Ralph Crane and published in 1999, includes a contribution from Chris Ackerley on the early fiction of Farrell which explores the influence of Malcolm Lowry in the three novels.¹² Ackerley was not the first to have appreciated the importance of Farrell's own reading in the Empire and early fiction.

Few commentators would dispute the effect that Malcolm Lowry, and specifically his novel, Under the Volcano, has had on the work of Farrell. The first of many references in Lavinia Greacen's biography shows Farrell in his second spell at Oxford, recovering from polio and identifying 'most completely' with the fragmented vision of Lowry's alcoholic Consul. He also discerned remarkable similarities between Lowry's life and his own.¹³ Greacen later records Farrell's 'pilgrimage' to Cuernavaca in Mexico to find the setting for Lowry's narrative; and further references to his preoccupation with this author recur in her account of Farrell's life for the years 1957 to 1978, the year before he died.¹⁴

Chris Ackerley, agreeing with Binns and with Spurling, thinks that Farrell discovered Under the

Volcano after he had written A Man From Elsewhere and while he was re-writing The Lung. He points out similarities in the characters of the Consul and Martin Sands, in their relationships with women, and in the structure of some closely-related chapters. Ackerley endorses Binns' listing of specific parallels between Lowry's novel and Farrell's third novel, A Girl in the Head - Boris' appearance, his alcoholism, his wanderings through pubs and gardens and his affinity with a stray dog;¹⁵ this animal, Ackerley reminds us, providing a special link with the novels of the trilogy (p.33). Ackerley also detects a strong vein of parody in Farrell's references to Lowry (p.28); and it is here that he notes an indebtedness to Nabokov's Lolita, also (pp.26 ff.). Michael Prusse would certainly endorse this sentiment in his chapter 'Stepping Stones: Echoes of Lolita' (pp.57 ff.), as would Spurling (p.60) and Crane and Livett (p.53). Greacen confirms Farrell's reading of Nabokov's work while at Oxford in approximately the same period as his introduction to Lowry.

Richard Hughes and Joseph Conrad as influences on Farrell's protagonists feature in Simon Caterson's article in The Critical Grip.¹⁶ Here biographical similarities are pointed up, together with the fact

that Farrell knew Hughes personally. But the weight of this discussion lies in Caterson's argument that Farrell, following Hughes and Conrad, used 'central protagonists derived from the superfluous man figure that was recurrent in nineteenth-century Russian literature' (p.37). Caterson also has to nod to Lowry in his exposition. The main force of the superfluous man, Caterson would argue, is to be found in the trilogy; but he sees additional parallels in A Man From Elsewhere. Farrell's second and third novels, featuring Martin Sands and Boris Slattery, men only too aware of their own superfluousness, are not alluded to. Spurling and Binns acknowledge Farrell's debt to Hughes; Binns would add Conrad as an influence, in agreement with Caterson. Crane and Livett, however, quarrel with the notion of 'influence', arguing:

' . . . [T]he idea that Farrell is 'influenced' by Joseph Conrad, Richard Hughes, Malcolm Lowry and so on . . . seems to relegate him to the position of conservative re-writer of the capitalist/imperialist status quo' (p.21). Nevertheless, Prusse is convinced by Farrell's own enthusiasm (p.18). For Farrell wrote:

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that Farrell knew Hughes personally. But the weight of this discussion lies in Caterson's argument that Farrell, following Hughes and Conrad, used 'central protagonists derived from the superfluous man figure that was recurrent in nineteenth-century Russian literature' (p.37). Caterson also has to nod to Lowry in his exposition. The main force of the superfluous man, Caterson would argue, is to be found in the trilogy; but he sees additional parallels in A Man From Elsewhere. Farrell's second and third novels, featuring Martin Sands and Boris Slattery, men only too aware of their own superfluousness, are not alluded to. Spurling and Binns acknowledge Farrell's debt to Hughes; Binns would add Conrad as an influence, in agreement with Caterson. Crane and Livett, however, quarrel with the notion of 'influence', arguing:

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qualities he shares with Conrad at his best.' There is evidence, also, from Farrell's notebooks that he was willing to emulate the effective features of Hughes' style, as he jots down a reminder to himself: 'Start with the kind of trick that Richard Hughes pulls in The Fox.' ¹⁷

John Spurling shares Prusse's view on literary influences in his perceptive essay 'As Does the Bishop'. Spurling's fundamental assumption of the imprint of Lowry's and Hughes' work on Farrell's development is clear (pp.156 f.). He also sets out in detail how Stendhal's La Chartreuse de Parme and Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain affected Farrell's style (pp.167 ff.). His analysis relates to The Siege of Krishnapur, The Singapore Grip and The Hill Station; but he does not touch on The Lung, although Farrell discovered Mann's work, post-polio at Oxford; ¹⁸ and the similarities between Mann's novel about a sanatorium and Farrell's second novel are too marked to be ignored.

The record of Farrell's teaching years in France, 1960-1962, as detailed by Lavinia Greacen, lists his favourite reading at that time as Proust, Rimbaud, Malraux, Gide, Sartre, the Goncourts and Loti. Binns is among the first of Farrell's critics to note how

powerfully Loti's Pêcheur d'Islande affected Farrell as a schoolboy, and how it drew him into an appreciation of French literature: '. . . [T]here are certain phenomena for which an expression of Loti's will alone suffice,' said Farrell.¹⁹ Prusse acknowledges Loti's impact (pp.5,12), and notes that Farrell also mentions his admiration of, and interest in the works of Colette and Sartre (p.5). He strongly claims, in his Introduction, that the philosophical essays and novels of Albert Camus cannot fail to have impressed him (p.4); and he follows this up in his first chapter with references to the political influence on Farrell of Camus' L'Homme Révolté (pp.29,31).

Farrell's eager absorption of the works of Sartre and Camus in the 60s is mentioned by Greacen;²⁰ and she relates his stated ambition, before beginning The Siege of Krishnapur, to match the achievement of Camus in La Peste (p.271). Cichón and Binns suggest that references to existentialist philosophy, and particularly to Camus' L'Étranger are to be found in Farrell's early work. Binns is particularly probing on the parallels between The Siege of Krishnapur and La Peste, principally analysing the pervasive imagery of death and disease in both novels (pp.69 ff.). There

is a shared sentiment here with Crane and Livett's comment on The Lung, although they would draw L'Étranger into the comparison (p.46). Troubled Pleasures emphasises, also, the indebtedness of Farrell's early narratives to the 'pessimistic late modernism' of Samuel Beckett and Jean-Paul Sartre, highlighting the existential 'ennui and despair' (Ronald Binns' phrase, p.37) of the latter, and the Absurdist input of the former, and reminding the reader of Frank Kermode's dictum: '. . . Existentialist man repeats the gestures of the tragic hero in a context which is not tragic but absurd.' 21

Prusse, developing his introductory ideas in his first three chapters, draws all the same conclusions. In his fourth chapter, 'Individuals at Siege', (pp.67-73), he shows how existentialist philosophy coloured Farrell's early work, arguing strongly for the influence of Camus' essay, Le Mythe de Sisyphe. Pointing out along the way that it was Camus' conviction that 'the best setting for a discussion of the human condition is the clash of civilizations under the influence of the inevitable forces of history' (Prusse p.75), he turns to the trilogy and, in Chapter 10, 'Communities at Siege', places the archetypal situation

of the siege and the individuals bound up within it in the context of Camus' Le Mythe de Sisyphe, La Peste and L'Homme Révolté (pp.185 ff.). Prusse states:

It may also be due to Camus that Farrell turned his attention towards an actual siege, because the French author makes use of such an event in his novel La Peste. After the many links established for Farrell's previous fiction, it is hardly surprising that a close analysis of the Empire trilogy again reveals remarkable traces of the French writer's influence. (p.185).

The work of Prusse has gone further than that of any other commentator to explore the possibilities of French existential influence on the trilogy and on the early novels of J.G.Farrell.

The theme of communities at siege in the Empire novels can be demonstrably linked to the pervasive existentialist sense of personal and individual siege, or unbreakable isolation, in Farrell's three early narratives. Sayer is caught in a political and moral siege; Sands' physical and emotional isolation is perhaps more obvious; and Boris is trapped in his own parody of a romantic hero. Archer, Hopkins, Matthew Webb and Walter Blackett are not so far from

these men. But the major transition in Farrell's developing technique is the shift from the individual to the universal, the movement in emphasis from the condition of Man to the plight of an empire. Images of Sartrean confusion, absurdity and decay found in the early fiction are re-worked in Farrell's later writing to describe the agents which burrow into the foundations of an empire. References to death and to suicide (the latter surely prompted at least in part by Camus' Le Mythe de Sisyphe), from Regan and Heinrich, from Wilson and Monica and from Dr. Cohen and the Urbino sister, resonate in the trilogy with metaphors for the self-inflicted death of British imperialism. One feature observed by Crane and Livett in The Lung, namely an 'affirmation of life' and of hope (p.44) re-appears only in the final chapter of The Singapore Grip, suggesting the influence of a writer who pre-dates French Existentialism and who probably owes more to James Joyce than to Sartre or Camus - that is, Samuel Beckett.

Beckett's novels date from the 30s, but his seminal Absurdist work, Waiting for Godot, appearing in London in 1955, set a trend which was to flourish

well into the 60s when Farrell was writing. While in New York in 1966, he saw a production of Endgame and is said by Greacen to have 'been haunted by Beckett's lines' (p.212). As N.F.Simpson began to develop his Absurdist style in 1957 with A Resounding Tinkle, to be followed by One Way Pendulum in 1960, this last year saw the performance in London and New York of five plays from the pen of Harold Pinter - The Room, The Dumb Waiter, A Night Out, The Caretaker and Night School. Boris' repetition of the word 'succulent' in the Capri café is surely a remembered quotation from the breakfast scene dialogue in The Birthday Party.²² Similarly, Sands' Absurdist conversation with Exmoore, Harris and Wilson in The Lung owes a debt to the dialogue of all three dramatists.

. . . [Wilson] came over to Exmoore.
 'Can I have a biscuit?' he asked mildly.
 'Down, boy, down.'
 'Give him a biscuit,' Harris said. 'You've got a whole packet left.'
 'All right then. Open wide, there's a good dog.' He crammed a biscuit into Wilson's mouth and he went back to drawing cars at the window.
 'If you weren't sick why did they put you in an ambulance?' asked Sands.
 'It was the churchwardens' idea. They wanted to keep up the parish prestige. They were afraid someone might see me if I took the bus.' (p.99).

Placing Farrell, then, as the writer of the early novels draws him into the company of contemporary playwrights, and a playwright/novelist - those working in the Absurdist movement which began in France with another Irishman in the 30s, and developed in Britain in the 60s. Crane and Livett would argue, in comments specific to A Man From Elsewhere, that Farrell sits comfortably with Orwell and Koestler, in their disillusionment with Russian Communism, and with Graham Greene in his examination of 'some implications of Catholic morality' (pp.38 f.). However, they return, in their analysis of all the early fiction, to the impact of the pessimistic Absurdism of Samuel Beckett; and they add that this 'echoes throughout Farrell's six completed novels.' Certainly the absurd, often intensified with gallows humour as it develops in the trilogy, underlines not only the individual's pain within his own existence, but stresses his political, strategic and economic helplessness in the face of the giant clashes of history.

As a writer in the 60s, Farrell fits in with Lionel Trilling's view of an era, in his Beyond Culture (1967), in which writers live in a disillusioned world and express 'the disenchantment of our culture with itself' (p.19). Patricia Waugh, in Harvest of the

60s (1995) endorses Trilling's feeling, looking back to a 'mood . . . of disaffection' in the literature stretching from the 60s to the 90s (p.24). The 60s, she notes, was a time of psychological therapy and psychoanalytical movements. Farrell, together with Iris Murdoch, John Fowles, William Golding and Muriel Spark had, in addition, lived through the Second World War, and saw and sympathised with the new growth of left-wing groups and socialist journalism in the late 50s and early 60s when he was an emerging writer. He was clearly influenced by Samuel Beckett's dramatic reflections on time, identity and destiny; and he may have been reacting to what Doris Lessing identified, in her The Golden Notebook (1962), as 'British insularity' and 'parochialism'. A Man From Elsewhere certainly reflects all these issues in, perhaps, a somewhat contrived and 'second-hand' fashion; but The Lung and A Girl in the Head were to follow, in which Farrell engaged with the problems on a more personal level and stamped his own mark upon his discussion and exploration of them.

Viewing Farrell as a writer of historical fiction, Neil McEwan's assessment of him as one of the six novelists 'committed to the permanent problem

of perspective' (p.2), has already been alluded to. Although John Fowles, another of McEwan's six, has been noted by other critics as a close contemporary of Farrell's from the point of view of historical fiction entertaining some exploration of physical sexuality,²³ it is also worth considering William Golding, also listed by McEwan, as a writer who not only observed the history of Man, as in The Inheritors (1954) and Rites of Passage (1980), but who also examined the condition of Man in his most acclaimed novel, Lord of the Flies (1955), and in Free Fall (1959). The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces (1965) includes his essay, 'Fable', in which he speaks of 'the terrible disease [my emphasis] of being human.'²⁴ Golding is referred to by Lavinia Greacen as 'one of the writers [Farrell's] most admired' (p.25).

Crane and Livett point out that Farrell's interest in Empire coincided with contemporary academic and literary discussion of some aspects of British imperialism. They cite James Morris' Pax Britannica (1968) and Anthony Burgess' Malayan trilogy The Long Day Wanes (1956-1959), the latter fiction dealing with the loss of Empire in the Far East. Michael Prusse mentions M.M.Kay's The Far Pavilions (1978) in this

context, together with Paul Scott's The Raj Quartet (1976) (p.2). Crane and Livett observe that the quartet overlaps with Farrell's work. The Jewel in the Crown was published in 1966, to be followed by The Day of the Scorpion in 1968; The Towers of Silence appeared in 1971, and A Division of the Spoils was published in 1975. Farrell read the second book of the trilogy while on his trip to India in 1971. In his Diary he sums up his own response to the work as 'interested but dubious'.²⁵ In his review of the fourth book, however, he writes: 'Its [A Division of the Spoils] two great and time-resisting virtues are, first. the extraordinary range of characters it so skilfully portrays and, secondly, its powerful evocation of the last days of British India, now quietly slipping away into history.'²⁶ E.M.Forster must also be mentioned in the context of literary discussions of Empire since, although there is no direct evidence of Farrell's obligation to the earlier writer, Lavinia Greacen does state that in 1966/67 Farrell was 'devouring' Forster's work together with that of other writers (p.214); and some of the concerns of A Passage to India were also those of Farrell in The Siege of Krishnapur and the unfinished

The Hill Station. Features of style, especially in passages of description, are strongly redolent of Forster's writing. The opening of The Siege of Krishnapur, for example - 'Round about there will be the unending plain still, exactly as it had been for many miles back, a dreary ocean of bald earth' (SK p.9) echoes Forster's 'No mountains infringe on the curve. League after league the earth lies flat, heaves a little, is flat again.' 27

The 50s and 60s were also years in which works were being published by men and women who had grown up in colonised countries and who had examined the issues first-hand. V.S.Naipaul, for instance, whose novels The Middle Passage (1962) and An Area of Darkness (1964) saw the Caribbean as a region of the displaced, and India as a country stranded between the past and the future, highlighted new aspects of colonial history. Doris Lessing, educated and living for a long time in what was then Southern Rhodesia, was writing in the 50s about a world of rigid convention and racial prejudice. Her five-novel sequence, The Children of Violence, begun in 1952, insists that these evils have to be withstood if the integrity of the individual is to be preserved. This was also a time for the

philosophical dissection and examination of the colonization of weaker peoples by powerful nations. Frantz Fanon explored the racial aspects of colonization in his Black Skin White Masks in 1952 and, with a Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, looked at violence in the colonial context in The Wretched of the Earth in 1961. Sartre also wrote an introduction to Albert Memmi's The Colonizer and the Colonized (1965) in which the French-Tunisian Memmi criticises the European Left in general and the Communist party in particular for having underestimated the national impact of colonial liberation. Farrell, in direct contact with this problem while working in France in the post-Algerian-liberation years, certainly sympathised with this view, as he demonstrated in A Man From Elsewhere. Links were surely made here with the French-Algerian Camus, whose work made the deepest impression on Farrell.

From the first, commentators have found it difficult to categorise Farrell as a writer of historical fiction. McEwan sees him as blending 'Realism and scepticism in new ways'; he would not commit him to either the 'traditional' or 'experimental' group (p.17). Prusse is unable to pin down Farrell's

particular point of view. Is he a pessimist? Hopeful? Or is he a 'novelist of ideas' ? (p.4). Crane and Livett feel that he is postmodern because he 'foregrounds the discursive nature of heroism'; yet he is 'unpostmodern' in that 'his incorporation of documentary reference material '. . . appears to make reference to "the world" and to textual records of the world, without . . . recognising the problematic relations between the two . . . ' (p.15). They feel that Farrell is a writer of historiographic meta-fiction because his protagonists are, in the borrowed words of Linda Hutcheon, 'the ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history' (p.27).²⁸ They also argue that he is 'almost' a New Historicist because of his awareness that 'history is a continual process of interchange between events, texts and the general culture of any period . . . ' (pp.16 f.). They conclude that the trilogy is a Marxist project attempting to show 'through hindsight the process of an inexorable dialectical materialism' (p.20).

Looking for a place for Farrell amongst writers of historical fiction, John McLeod, in his essay

'J.G. Farrell and Post-Imperial Fiction', ²⁹ finds Farrell's work 'too experimental to be realist, not innovative enough to be truly postmodern . . . ' (p.182). He feels that the work cannot be categorised as Postcolonial or Imperial-Nostalgic either (p.183). McLeod would prefer to fashion a new term for Farrell - Post-Imperial; that is, he belongs to a group of British writers who, like Rushdie, Mo and Ishiguro, for example, have a purchase on another nationality and culture, and who show the imperial order misfiring but offer possible ideals for the future (pp.185,193). McLeod concludes his comments by suggesting that it is preferable to read Farrell in the context of a 'growing body of fiction . . . rather than at the tail-end of an exhausted novelistic tradition . . . ' (p.194). This view chimes very well with Farrell's own opinion that 'one of the more agreeable consequences [of the growth of writers from the old Empire] is the residue of novels written in our language by writers who belong to other cultures.' ³⁰

In summary, then, the bulk of the criticism of Farrell's fiction deals with the Empire trilogy, although the most prolific commentators do find it worthwhile analysing the three early novels. Of these

critics, some see the early work as bearing the seeds of the more successful later fiction; and they identify features which provide a continuity to be carried forward and developed in the Empire novels.

'Labelling' Farrell's historical fiction would appear to be a difficult task since his work does not fit comfortably into existing categories. The answer seems to lie in the invention of an alternative group which draws Farrell into a newly-growing body of novelists rather than attempting to place him in a tradition which is already finished.

From as early as 1986, with the publication of Ronald Binns' monograph, critics have been aware of the importance of Farrell's own reading in the growth of his craft. Contemporary influences on the writer seem to be led by the Absurdist novels and drama of Samuel Beckett. Amongst novelists of the 50s and 60s, John Fowles and William Golding might be considered in this light. Anthony Burgess, M.M.Kay and Paul Scott, writing contemporaneously with Farrell, are likely to have had some impact on his later, Empire work.

Inspiration for the early narratives, it has been suggested, comes from Farrell's reading as a schoolboy and as a student in the works of Malcolm Lowry, Vladimir Nabokov, Richard Hughes, Joseph Conrad and Thomas Mann. Evidence has been offered, also, for the influence of French, specifically existentialist writings; and some commentators discern these strands being developed through the first novels into the major 'Empire' work.

Links with the Algerian-French writer, Albert Camus, have been shown as emerging from events in Farrell's life, from his reading, his philosophy and his political thinking. The tone, imagery, characterisation and the central metaphor of his early writing show the imprint of the existentialist author; critics have identified L'Étranger, Le Mythe de Sisyphe, L'Homme Révolté and La Peste as being significant in their impact on Farrell's novels. The task of this study is to pinpoint and examine the influence of Camus' ideas and literary work, and to show, firstly, their importance in the concept and creation of Farrell's first three novels and, secondly, to trace the strongest influences as they

transfer to, and are developed and refined in,
the Empire trilogy.

CHAPTER 2

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF

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The link which Michael Prusse identifies as existing between J.G.Farrell's work, his early writing specifically, and twentieth century French literature rests largely on the novels and the philosophical essays of Albert Camus.

Camus' first major publications, the essay Le Mythe de Sisyphe and the novel L'Étranger,¹ were both published in 1942 and were intended by the author to offer a synthesised understanding of his philosophy, approaching as they do the same issues from different perspectives. Camus' thinking suggests that human existence lacks any ground. There is no reason why any individual should exist rather than not exist. Human life lacks essential meaning, and is rendered absurd because the limitations of human understanding do not allow the satisfaction of achieving a complete knowledge of existence. Death, for Camus, is the principle source of human anxiety and despair, since death is the annihilation of a

of a creature made by and for God; but there is no God, and no life beyond this life. Malraux understood that 'The essay gives the other book (L'Étranger) its full meaning and, above all, changes what in the novel first seemed monotonous and impoverished into a positive austerity, with primitive force.' ²

Camus' next novel, La Peste, ³ expressed 'the suffocation . . . the atmosphere of danger and exile which we have all lived in . . . during the war.' He added that he wanted 'to extend this interpretation to the notion of life in general.' ⁴ Three features of the novel stand out as defining Camus' philosophy. The first is the circular structure of the work, which surely suggested to Farrell the framework for his The Siege of Krishnapur, and probably for the early novels, The Lung and A Girl in the Head, too, and which is reinforced by Rieux's final message in the narrative; life and its problems go round and round without ending, and there is no basis for hope for the future (LP pp.284 f.). Secondly, Camus uses images of sickness and death in La Peste to form an extended metaphor for the condition of Man. These echo and enlarge the references which he had already employed in L'Étranger; for example, the images of elderly

decay and death in the rest home (LE pp.15-22) and the description of Salamano and his dog who resemble one another in their similar manifestations of skin disease (p.30). Finally, in the character of Rieux, Camus not only reiterates his disbelief in 'an all-powerful God' (LP p.122), concluding that life is a 'never-ending defeat' (p.123), but articulates Meursault's dilemma in L'Étranger, stating '. . . [W]e can't stir a finger in this world without the risk of bringing death to somebody . . . each of us has the plague within him' (pp. 234 f.).

L'Homme Révolté,⁵ an essay which attacks those who still clung to Marxist-Socialism, and which fuelled the famous Sartre/Camus quarrel which was to re-appear in Farrell's A Man From Elsewhere in the differences between Gerhardt and Regan, also offers the concept of the innocent or un-guilty murderer as connecting with the belief of the absurdity of life. 'If one believes in nothing, if nothing makes sense, if we can assert no value whatsoever, everything is permissible and nothing is important' (LHR p.13). An advocate for Meursault might put this argument to justify his actions and his otherwise inexplicable lack of regret or feeling of shame.

Close to the philosophy set out in L'Homme Révolté is the view of Clamence in Camus' novel La Chute.⁶ Clamence is not a murderer, although he is associated with death. He is a lawyer who is 'bored' (LC p.29). His relationships with women are cynical: 'True love is exceptional . . . the rest of the time there is vanity or boredom' (pp.43 f.). He witnesses a woman throwing herself from a bridge. He had 'wanted to run and yet didn't move an inch . . . thought . . . "Too late, too far . . . " ' (p.52). This indifference matches the indifferent 'silence of the universe' which is the response to 'human questioning' in Camus' Introduction to L'Homme Révolté (p.14). It is also redolent of Meursault's response to the two deaths in L'Étranger, that of his mother and that of the Arab whom he shoots.

Indifference forms the basis for a specific system of unbelief in L'Étranger. The novel begins and ends with it in Meursault's inability to perceive the importance of his mother's death and in his denial of the tragedy of his own demise. So far as living is concerned, the off-hand remarks about having to 'get used to' various aspects of life seem to suffice: Salamano hadn't been happy with his wife, but 'he'd

got quite used to her' (LE p.47); Meursault's mother had taught him that 'you ended up getting used to everything' (p.75); and Meursault believed that, when his mother had to be taken care of in a home, 'we'd both got used to our new lives' (p.85).

Meursault's lack of belief arises from two principal areas of human experience - society and religion.

Although he is aware of society's potential for assigning guilt - '. . . [Y]ou're always partly to blame . . . ' (p.24) - Meursault does not believe in the norms of behaviour commonly accepted by society; and this reduces his life to meaninglessness. He cannot weep at his mother's death, nor does he wish to see her before she is buried (p.12). He does not feel regret at the death of the Arab, only 'a kind of annoyance' (p.69). Facing death, pursued by the magistrate for a statement of Christian belief, and offered spiritual consolation by the prison chaplain, Meursault can only utter expressions of denial, concluding that '. . . [I]t didn't seem to matter' (p.111), and that the whole of life is 'absurd' (p.115). In the final pages of the narrative a substitute for belief is achieved from the sum of Meursault's

experiences; although the truth he discovers is a negative one, as Camus remarks in his Afterword (p.119). He feels 'happy' and 'justified' because he had been able to lay himself open 'for the first time to the benign indifference of the world', and had found that it was 'so much like myself' (p.117).

In the context of all this there are significant parallels between L'Étranger and the early novels of J.G.Farrell, those being A Man From Elsewhere (1963), The Lung (1965) and A Girl in the Head (1967). 7

* * * * *

Sayer, the protagonist of Farrell's first published novel, A Man From Elsewhere, like Meursault, awakens to 'a negative part of himself' (AMFE p.121). He is a passionate man in the sense of the 'tenacious . . . passion' described in Camus' Afterword to L'Étranger (p.119); but his passion is an abstract belief in politics; it is his justification for his own existence. The title of this novel is carefully chosen from the saying 'A man from elsewhere is a man without a soul' (p.53). Sayer does not relate to other people; he has no family (p.24); his affairs

with girls are 'a waste of time' and are associated with his 'failure' to deal with union men (p.17). Although purporting to be a hard-line Communist at the beginning of the novel, he does not relate to his own society either. He wonders how society manages to keep going 'when it was held together only with rotten people who . . . drifted meaninglessly from day to day selling one another goods they did not need . . . (p.32). His criticism of society's youth - ' . . . [Y]oung people believed in nothing and had no aim or direction' (p.149) - might equally well be levelled against himself. He is beginning to conclude that 'he was immersed in the same barren soliloquies which had annihilated Luc's (a friend of Regan's) will to act for the last twenty years' (p.150). The experience of living, Farrell suggests, erodes the political and philosophical ideals of the individual.

Luc, a film writer, ⁸ has a political identity too. It can be seen as a development of Meursault's view of his own life; ' . . . [H]ow do you proclaim your individualism except by making gestures against mass ideas?' (AMFE p.100). Farrell also aligns Luc's view with Meursault's rejection of God. 'And God

doesn't care. God might have cared but God's dead' (AMFE pp.76 f.). However, Luc's frustration is overtaken, as Sayer suggests, by brooding inertia. Seeking a meaning for his life and alighting significantly on his anger at the outrages being committed in the Algerian war, he concludes:

But the question remained: what did it matter? Just what difference did it make in the long run . . . Energy and endeavour seemed as wild an insanity as monastic discipline (p.49).

Echoes from Meursault's 'It didn't seem to matter' are strong here.

Luc fades from the novel on an existentialist decrescendo prompted by a casual statement of purposelessness from his landlady's niece: ' . . . [T]here's nothing I'd like to do' (p.168).

How many millions of people at this same moment were saying exactly the same thing? . . . in a way he did not really exist. He was merely a piece of living meat . . . it was all happening at a great distance. It was another person who was with this girl and he was merely watching the scene without being involved in it. Nor was he involved in anything. In his mind there was a great and terrifying silence (p.168).

Secondary characters in Farrell's novel are also victims of existentialist doubts. Luc's actor-friend, Simon Bowman, for example, who appears very briefly in the narrative, sums up Luc's and Meursault's feelings when he confesses: 'It's hard to carry on when you simply don't believe in anything . . .'(p.57) ⁹ Gretchen, Regan's 'daughter', also sees herself eventually 'taking her place alone in a world she did not want, believing, like everyone else, in nothing at all' (p.125). ¹⁰ Tragic thoughts about life are not for the major talkers and thinkers alone in Farrell's novels. They are universal.

The existentialist views of the third major character in Farrell's novel, Regan, sit awkwardly in the narrative and are not demonstrably 'felt' or 'lived' expressions of belief being, as they are, reported by Luc on behalf of the dying man, in a somewhat wooden and contrived conversation with Sayer. The whole tenor of Luc's exposition, however, is redolent of Camus' philosophy as seen through the creation of Meursault's character. 'The general idea is that the only way a twentieth-century man can fulfil himself is by rigorous individualism in the face of mass ideas, mass culture . . . ' (p.98). Taking politics as an example where Camus might take

take the law, Luc explains that ideologies are rigid and cannot bend to changing circumstances: only the individual can be flexible enough to do this, and must do it for the sake of 'the future of humanity'. Sayer is unconvinced, and Luc takes the concept a stage further:

Only in this way can the root evils of modern society, such as over-population and group-thinking, be attacked at the root rather than by hasty and ineffectual stop-gap measures. Isolation would become a state of grace and the outsider a hero of society (p.98).

Here, arguably, lies one of the most important ideas to transfer from L'Étranger to Farrell's work. Its centrality in the structure of the novel, and the artificial 'framing' of the credo proclaim this. It furnishes Farrell with a context, a raison d'être and a definition for all his early protagonists and, in subtler forms, for the protagonists in the Empire novels. Farrell is not concerned to eradicate root evils such as 'over-population and group-thinking' in the early novels, although he does explore the politics of national and economic empires in the trilogy, and ecclesiastical schism in The Hill Station. He is, however, wholly and continuously

preoccupied with the isolation of the individual and with the unorthodox strain of heroism which resides in the man who, for many and various reasons, has to be himself, no matter how uncomfortable that sits with his own society or how painful it is for the man. Meursault is the template for this individual. Sayer, Sands and Slattery follow in his footsteps, placed in differing circumstances, sometimes touched with comedy and very strongly coloured, one suspects, by Farrell's experiences and responses to his own life. These characters form the major legacy left by the early fiction for the trilogy, and outline the first stages for the development for Archer, Hopkins and Webb, the 'great' outsiders.

Many of the characters in Farrell's first novels, then, embody aspects of Camus' existentialist views as expressed in L'Étranger's Meursault. Farrell's characters are more intellectually self-conscious and articulate the pain of existence more specifically: and, unlike Camus' character, none of them achieves even a negative resolution to his dilemma. However, the ennui and despair identified by Ronald Binns, and deriving from Camus' novel, frustrate and paralyse them and sit brooding over Farrell's writing: and they

represent a motif to which he would return in his next two novels and in his later work.

The melancholy protagonist of Farrell's second novel, The Lung, has every reason to feel a sense of ennui and black despair for real rather than philosophical causes; for this narrative moves away from politics and ideas to autobiography, using Farrell's own experience as a victim of polio confined to an iron lung for much of its material. This suggests, perhaps that Farrell's preoccupation with French Existentialism was not so much a fashionable intellectual attachment, but was rather the discovery of an expression for the experience of living which resonated strongly with his own.

The novel begins with absurdity: Martin Sands wanders mindlessly into a racecourse booth badly in need of a drink, only to be confronted by a fortune-teller who gives him a hackneyed and optimistic forecast and then, angered by his doubts, predicts his approaching death. It ends with indifference: 'And later the disgust he felt with himself was suffocated by the drappings of indifference that hung

on every aspect of his life like sodden garments' (p.199). There is a parallel with the structure of L'Étranger here, where Meursault encounters the absurdity of the rest home at the beginning of the narrative, and ends with feelings of indifference towards his own society: 'What did it matter . . . ?' (LE p.116).

Martin Sands is a man in despair even before he succumbs to his sickness. Sands' marriage has failed, he has given up his job, he is a drunk, he is uncertain and 'restless'. He has reached a stage where, for him, like Meursault, life is without belief and is meaningless, and the universe is silent: 'That silence against which in slow motion he was unable to avoid seeing the endlessly repeated film strip of his own sad, sour thoughts' (p.43).¹¹ One of those thoughts, when he has become aware of the seriousness of his illness,

- '. . . [N]ow nobody could blame him for anything' (p.51) - is a reminder of Meursault's consciousness of society's readiness to attach blame. Sands feels that 'The habit of looking for and needing excuses for our failures . . . is one of the most distressing aspects of our poor human condition' (p.51). There is loneliness, too, Sands realises, that generates in life a 'slow despair' (p.70).

Adding to the weariness of existence is the sense of time passing, of waiting for something out of one's control to happen.¹² We have seen this in Part 2 of L'Étranger, in particular in Meursault's long exposition on coping with time whilst in prison.¹³ There are recurring references to waiting in Camus' novel.¹⁴ Farrell's sense of enclosed timelessness, both in the iron lung and in the hospital ward scenario compares closely with Camus' prison backdrop. ' "Time goes so slowly here," was all he said . . . After tea there was supper and after supper there was the night and another day' (pp.123 f.). Significantly, Sands is speaking here of living through Sundays. Meursault's comments at the end of Chapter 2 in L'Étranger: ' . . . I'd managed to get through another Sunday' (IE p.28). Meursault is a free and relatively untroubled man at this point in the narrative; as is Sands when he comments on the wedding and the reception; these were events 'on which he had been counting to get him through the long, slow hours' (p.14). Even in the opening phase of his novel, Farrell offers an unavoidable allusion, in the naming of his protagonist, to the 'sands of time'.

Reference to time attaching to the religious

calendar, in The Lung, would also include the careful noting of two Easters, one year apart and providing a circular framework for the novel - 'One Easter Monday . . . ' (p.9), and 'It was Easter already' (p.207) - and is also an ironic reference to regeneration and the religious belief in the possibility of the renewal of life. It is despair which produces the irony in Farrell's novels.¹⁵ This is clearly seen not only in the figure of Sands, but also in the single representative of religion on Sands' ward. Depressed and unstable, he is the first of many such clerics in Farrell's novels.

Exmoore, or ex-Moore - 'a joke of some kind' (p.110) - an ex-minister of the church, just as Sands is an ex-journalist and Harris is an ex-cricketer, is tragically aware of the sham nature of his belief in God and of his ministry: 'It's just that I realised that I wanted them to love me, not God. I didn't give a damn about God' (p.206). He conceals his despair behind ironical wit, as when making his entry into the novel, he pretends to offer Holy Communion to Sands, recovering in his iron lung - 'Australian brandy' mixed with ground-up wafer to filter into Sands'

feeding-tube - 'Make a sort of Instant Host' (p.80). Interestingly, it is also through Exmoore's irony that Farrell parodies the dialogue of British post-war films glorifying the stiff-upper-lip soldier batting on a sticky wicket in the colonies: 'Let's have no panic in the ranks. Just remember you're British. Carry on Sergeant-Major. Deathwards march' (p.168). Exmoore has more to say about death in this novel than about God. ¹⁶

Despair-driven irony is also part of Sands' distinctive voice. 'Not exactly the life and soul of the party before', Sands, viewing the weeks and months ahead of his recovery, makes a mental note: 'All he had to do now was to get his arms working, get out of bed, climb onto the nearest bar stool and start all over from the beginning' (p.110). In the context of a group of hopeless men recovering in hospital, Farrell's irony is black. It waits to develop into the gallows humour found in the Empire trilogy.

There are breaks in what Michael Prusse terms Farrell's 'existentialist aura', revealing sensitive feelings which have not been suffocated by indifference

and despair. ¹⁷ As in Meursault's relationship with Marie, Sands experiences the glimmerings of a genuinely warm and concerned feeling for a woman, in his affection for the leukaemia patient, Monica. It has to be added that such an uncomplicated, unstressed and un-sexual view of a woman is rare in all Farrell's fiction. There are similar feelings shown towards a man, Harris who, in despair stands in the ward tearing up the newspaper cuttings which record his cricketing career. 'Wait a minute . . . We could stick them together from the back with sellotape . . . We can easily get copies . . . '(p.201). Farrell uses an odd parentally-anxious tone in Sands' speech here; and, prophetically for his own life, he makes Sands suggest that he and Harris could find some hope together: 'I . . . might get hold of a small place in the country and try to grow something. You could come too' (p.203). For Monica who, he learns, has an illness which will take away her life, Sands offers a sad requiem: 'He thought of her growing up for nothing. Her body developing into a woman's body for nothing . . . Monica! It was impossible to think of her dying' (pp.204 f.). What raises such sensitivities in Sands, and strips them of their protective irony, is the consciousness at the end of the novel, very closely akin to the

revelation in the last chapter of Meursault's story, that everyone, in Camus' words, would be 'condemned' (LE p.116). 'Death' as Sands concludes, 'is the end of a dubious reality' (TL p.189). It may be the death of a young girl's body; or it may be, as in the case of Harris, the death of part of one's identity. It is here that Sands realises that, as Meursault expresses it, 'The others too would be condemned one day. He too would be condemned' (LE p.116). The irony of the once drunken and feckless Sands has fallen away because he has extracted from his experiences a new awareness that his pain is not exclusive; it is part of the condition of Man.

It is in The Lung that Farrell shows early on and most clearly that, as according to existentialist philosophy, Man's life is shaped by internal and external factors.¹⁸ Meursault's pedestrian, small-town, colonial life, and his prison environment, where he is trapped by society, its conventions, its laws and religion, is a good illustration of this belief. Farrell, partly using his own experience, frames the narrative of The Lung within the trapped emotions of a man who is imprisoned by his illness - inside an

iron lung, on a ward, in a hospital - within concentric circles.

The claustrophobic atmosphere in Farrell's novel is closely akin to that of Camus' L'Étranger; and it is not unlike that of his La Peste where, in Part 2 after the town has been closed to the outside, Camus' narrator remarks: '. . . that all . . . were, so to speak, in the same boat '(p.65). He describes their state as being 'in exile in one's own home'(LP p.71).¹⁹ La Peste is a substantial metaphor for the condition of Man; and the image which dominates the novel is that of the state of siege.

The 'siege' conditions in The Lung are clear: the physical restraints - extreme in Sands' case - the imposed disciplines, the vetoes on normal comings and goings, the low-key hysteria and the hopelessness and angst overlaid with a pervading sense of sickness and death. All these things shape the lives and responses of Sands, Harris, Exmoore and Wilson. They are all 'in the same boat'.

Place, time, even the physical environment matter and can bring pressure to bear on the individual.

Camus refers to this continuously in L'Étranger using the detail of dazzling light. He notes the 'blaze of light' making Meursault feel uncomfortable in the care home (LE p.14), the 'harsh light pouring down out of the sky' in the prison visitors' room (p.72) and, most dramatically, the light leaping off the Arab's knife at the scene of the murder 'like a red-hot blade gnawing at my eye-lashes and gouging out my stinging eyes' (p.60). Sands often refers to the hostility of the light in The Lung. It is during one of the endless Sundays that Sands observes an 'expression of acute agony' on Harris' face as he turns his head away from 'the hard, white light from the window . . . The room was filling up with that hard, white despair from the window. Sands cleared his throat hysterically' (TL p.123).²⁰ The metaphorical message is that the individual cannot separate his inner life from the external world. The belief that human life is shaped by numerous external influences, and the notion of imprisonment of the body and/or the emotions by the immediate environment, by society and politics and, importantly, by history, forms a concept and a motif which reverberate throughout Farrell's later 'siege' novels, the Empire trilogy.

The belief that belief itself is futile and is an uncertain thing, and that religious belief in particular can be a contentious, even a crippling thing, emerges in the first two novels of the trilogy. Lack of belief, generating a sense of despairing alienation and a bewildered uncertainty about one's life and its place in the world, strongly informs the creation of the character of the Major in Troubles, and lends pathos to the experiences and the final thoughts of the Collector in The Siege of Krishnapur. Matthew Webb (SG) develops from these characters; the individual who embodies that 'air of mingled futility and heroism' which marks out Farrellian protagonists, trying to justify their own picture of the world amidst the potted plants and teacups. ²¹

The comic irony, which is The Lung's true legacy to the rest of Farrell's fiction, distancing and protective, springs directly from existentialist meaninglessness, futility and bewilderment. Its full flowering is seen in Farrell's next comic novel, A Girl in the Head.

It has to be acknowledged that the existentialist

influence in Farrell's third novel is less obvious than in his earlier fiction partly because of the strength of his indebtedness to the Consul in Lowry's Under the Volcano and to Nabokov's Humbert Humbert in Lolita,²² and partly because the irony employed in The Lung develops so vividly and eccentrically in Farrell's style that it vies with, sometimes even masks the despair which emanates from the meaninglessness in Boris Slattery's life.

Boris is a parody of a hero. He stands in a completely different relationship to the reader from that of Sayer or Sands; and this is marked out very early on in the narrative. Boris is a sick man, like Sands; at the opening of the novel he suffers a heart-attack and, while unconscious, is lifted onto a stretcher together with the dropped potatoes which he has been carrying. The pain, the struggle and the fear which would have been the focus of the narrative in Sands' case are relinquished, while Farrell experiments with the first of the black and ironical similes which would become so much a part of the 'voice' of the author in his later work:

Meanwhile someone had collected up the potatoes and arranged them on the stretcher

around his recumbent body, rather as if he had been a side of beef on its way to the oven (pp.7 f.).

Boris' serious concern now is with his own mortality, and he is reminded of the passing of time. He contemplates 'the transience of life' and 'the passing of summer' (p.8). He is pessimistic and depressed: 'He was exhausted. His shoulders hung forward' (p.9); but he can no longer be viewed with any gravity or empathy, as Sands in his pain must be regarded, because his fictional weight has already been undercut and he has been depicted as absurd. Here, as in the drama of Samuel Beckett, the hopeless anxiety about the passing of time and the manifest absurdity of life are closely allied.

Boris is reminded again and again of the large chasm between what he believes himself to be - the heroic 'lead' in a piece of cinema (p.55) - and what factors in his life beyond his control reduce him to:

. . . [S]omething has gone wrong, I've never been able to find the person who can unlock those final doors and enter the room where I really am . . . the

real me waiting in utter silence for
 someone to get to know me . . .
 after all these futile years (p.206).

Boris places his hope in various other characters in the novel - Dr.Cohen and The Mysterious X, for example; disillusion is the end result. None is so great as his disillusion at his own decline into the rôle of voyeur at the coupling of the girl in his head, Inez, and his brother-in-law, Maurice. 'He stood there for a moment, immobilized by shock. Then he began to run home through the hideous moonlight' (p.216). Having persuaded himself that life's pain was 'somehow less important' because he felt that Inez was thinking of him 'from time to time', he rediscovers his old belief that 'people are contemptible, that hope is a lie, that life is a sordid charade . . . ' (p.121). The echoes from Meursault's belief that the whole of life is 'absurd' (LE p.115), and his estimation of all the people he had known - Marie, Raymond, Céleste, even Salamano's dog - as not mattering, are very strong in this part of the narrative; but they have been transferred by Farrell into the comic register for this novel. The central existentialist concept, however, remains unchanged in the final word of the novel: 'Nothing' (p.221). 23

It is interesting to note that, as in A Girl in the Head, Farrell re-states his central philosophy in the final lines of A Man From Elsewhere - in the image of the train carrying away Gretchen and his hopes of discrediting Regan: 'And now the train was leaving the platform and running along its shining rails and penetrating deeper into the shining maze of the world, deeper' (AMFE p.190). He also does this in The Lung, where Sands sums up his experiences and hopes for the future: 'It was just terrible' (TL p.207).

Finding the belief that life 'was to be enjoyed' at the same time 'a fugitive belief' and 'against all the evidence' (p.39), Boris is overwhelmed by a relentless sense of waiting. He sums it up in a sentiment already closely touched upon by one of Farrell's characters in A Man From Elsewhere:²⁴ Boris deplores 'the ache of weariness that comes from being alive twenty-four hours a day until you die' (p.84). Farrell turns to punning in the debate on one of L'Étranger's chief themes, the waiting as time passes. He bewails 'the weight of one's memories (p.35): and Farrell casts him as a waiter in a restaurant named The Groaning Board (to be read, as Crane and Livett

suggest, as *The Groaning Bored*).²⁵ Farrell's protagonist is also depicted as being tortured by waiting for the arrival of the girl of his fantasies, Inez. The writer, like Beckett, sees the comedy in this aspect of living, one of the tragedies of human existence; but he also shares Beckett's insistence that Time is the serious enemy. Being bounded by Time, 'None of our actions,' as Boris observes, 'is ever clearly begun or ended' (p.103).

Farrell's narrative is heavily punctuated by references to Time, some relentless - 'Time passed.' 'The minutes ticked by' (p.11) - and some cynically making use of idiomatic phrases like 'How time does fly' (p.18), 'From time to time . . . ' (p.54) and 'It's a long time since we . . . ' (p.56). Drunk and hysterically trying to keep his focus on a western in a cinema, Boris reaches a desperate crescendo of frustration, marking one of the key passages in Farrell's novel:

He was living alone inside an enormous clock. Beside him the cogs and wheels clicked over and over relentlessly, round and round in the same cruel circles. The same revolutions endlessly ending, endlessly beginning again, repeating, ending, beginning. He was alone in the clock (p.55).

The mantra-like utterance replicating the neurotic pacing or wheel-turning of a caged animal is reminiscent of the prison episode in L'Étranger. Boris' drunken hallucination has a clarity as strong as Meursault's as he realises that it is not cinemas, prisons or ideal women that entrap the individual: it is Life.

Boris is the last and most complex of the protagonists in Farrell's three early novels. Ironical and absurd he, more clearly than Sayer or Sands, even more clearly than Meursault, defines what alienates a man from his world and his own existence. He is the first of Farrell's heroes whose every writhing thought and action is described in the struggle to break out from the imprisonment of the human condition. Archer, Hopkins and Matthew Webb are to follow, whose emotions as described by Margaret Drabble, are pervaded by such language as 'confused, puzzled, surprised, doubtful, uncertain, hesitating, depressed . . .'.²⁶ The trilogy protagonists also offer, like Boris, a sense of continuous comic paradox which tempers the desperation of life found in Camus' writing, and which gives Farrell's mature work its distinctive voice.

Existentialist belief, then - or perhaps lack

of belief - finds its way in many forms into the early work of Farrell. Beginning with a novel of ideas, coloured with questions about the unsatisfactory nature of life and relationships, moving on to autobiographical fiction exploring the experience of suffering and isolation, Farrell develops the character who is to feature again and again in his most accomplished work - the absurd Everyman who is besieged by circumstances beyond his control and by life - his own 'outsider'.

CHAPTER 3

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Outsiders in the work of Camus and of Farrell are marked out not only by their lack of conventional beliefs and by a resignation to their own perception of the futility of life, but are conspicuous for their loneliness and isolation. As Camus expresses it in the Afterword to L'Étranger, the outsider wanders 'on the fringe' of his own society, and on 'the outskirts of life, solitary . . . '(p.118). This is clearly demonstrated in Camus' protagonist, Meursault, and is proclaimed in the very first paragraph of the novel in the terse and impersonal communication of the news of the death of his mother - a telegram reading 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely '(p.9). Camus quickly reinforces this sense of apartness by noting the distance to the rest home and the length of the bus journey, by suggesting the grudging response to Meursault's request for time off work and by adding that he takes his meals in Céleste's restaurant 'as usual' (pp.9 f.).

Meursault is uncomfortable with other people: with the warden at the home - 'The warden spoke to me again. But I wasn't really listening any more' (p.11); with the caretaker whose offer to allow Meursault to view his mother's body he declines - 'He didn't say anything and I was embarrassed because I felt I shouldn't have said that' (p.12); even with his next-door neighbour, Salamano, who beats his dog - 'I said "Good evening", but the old man went on swearing. So I asked him what the dog had done. He didn't answer' (p.31).

Camus situates his protagonist in alienating surroundings. Meursault is constantly afflicted by the heat and the glaring light of Algeria. He lives in a one-room flat where he cooks himself 'boiled potatoes' for a meal (p.30). His dog-beating neighbour has 'reddish scabs on his face' and 'thin and yellow' hair (p.30). His other neighbour lives off women (p.31); he beats them until they bleed (p.34) and he gets into fights with other men (p.32). For entertainment Meursault regularly goes to the cinema with Emmanuel, a workmate, who 'doesn't always understand what's going on. So you have to explain things to him' (p.37).

The proponent of the 'new Existentialism' or 'phenomenological Existentialism', Colin Wilson, writing in the 50s and 60s, says in the Postscript to his book The Outsider that such a protagonist 'instinctively rejects the everyday world - it is boring and unsatisfying'. He adds: 'Living is trivial and repetitive, fit only for servants.' ¹ Camus, at the outset, makes certain that there is little or nothing in the world of his protagonist for him to embrace. Physically, his surroundings are bleak if not distasteful; and socially, his situation tends to be isolating. This ensures that, although his outsider has no unusual feelings to express - indeed, he has little feeling at all - 'Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday. I don't know (p.9) - the writer can justifiably omit any sense of moral disapproval in the narrative and can expect the reader to respond to the honesty in the man, springing as it does out of his indifference to issues of feeling.

Farrell's first novel, A Man From Elsewhere, though cleverly employing the French saying 'A man from elsewhere is a man without a soul' (AMFE p.53), is also self-consciously echoing Camus' title. From the first pages of Farrell's narrative it is clear

that this protagonist is more privately self-aware, more cerebrally sophisticated and more articulate than Meursault; less of an Everyman, and perhaps more a reflection of Farrell himself. The opening paragraph shows him to be critically conscious of his Parisian surroundings - the 'pale, liquid light' and the 'biscuit-coloured stone of the school wall' (p.15); as in Meursault's Algiers, they oppress the consciousness. Farrell frequently echoes Camus' recurring references to intolerable heat in L'Étranger, especially as used at the funeral (pp.21,54 ff.) and on the beach where Meursault commits the murder (p.119). In A Man From Elsewhere, for example, he writes:

The afternoon was too damn' hot. He ripped open the buttons of his shirt and ran his hand over the damp skin of his chest. The heat was disastrous. It combined with the wine he had drunk to reduce his mental faculties to a sack of potatoes (AMFE p.119).

Camus' much-used phrase 'the glare from the sea' (LE p.54) often transfers to Farrell's narrative, too; for example: 'So he continued to lie on his back, grinning up at the glare of the sun and on his own misery' (AMFE p.48).

Sayer, unlike Meursault, views his surroundings

in a strongly political context. The language has left-wing resonances - 'workers', 'factories', 'liberty' and 'Paris the cradle of civilization. Paris of the factories . . .'(p.15). Sayer is unlike Meursault also in that he is prompted to view his world ironically. The notion of the old man and woman deserving more credit for standing on a whirling planet on two legs than a dog resting on four (pp.15 f.) is the first example in Farrell's work of the irony which is later to make his narrative so distinctive. This facility in the writer is severely curbed in A Man From Elsewhere, but nevertheless serves to distinguish between Camus' outsider who is initially excluded from his world because he is perplexed by it and cannot come to terms with it, and Farrell's character who seems to have the intellectual measure of what life has shown him, and feels contempt for it. Sayer comes closer to Colin Wilson's definition of the outsider who rejects a world he understands, in contradistinction to Meursault who is rejected by the world's meaninglessness.

Contempt is the basis for Sayer's relationship with other people. The novel begins with his argument with a girl in a bed. Sayer, like Meursault, stops

listening (p.16). The irony from his observations on the world drifts into his remarks to the girl. He leaves her flat reflecting that 'apart from a certain physical gratification' the relationship was 'nothing worth regretting, on the contrary . . . ' (p.17). Sayer feels irritation for the passenger who is thrown against him in the train on his way to see Gerhardt (p.17). He notes with displeasure the stale smell in Gerhardt's building (p.18); and as he reports on his meeting with the chemical workers, he is reminded 'by the ring of dull eyes' which had circled him 'of a picture of a monkeys' parliament' in a book he had been given as a child (p.20). Sayer is an active outsider whereas Camus' protagonist is, initially, merely passive and ill-at-ease. ²

The relationships which both men do accept - Meursault's with Raymond Sintès, and Sayer's with Gerhardt - reflect close similarities in the way in which Camus and Farrell begin to structure the plot. Sayer admires Gerhardt as a man 'who knew how to keep his thoughts to himself' (p.19) - another outsider, perhaps. Meursault, on a simpler level, finds what Raymond has to say 'interesting' and notices that he always dressed very smartly' (LE p.32). Sayer has to accept what seems

to be a political mission from Gerhardt in an episode strongly redolent of Verloc's interview with Mr. Vladimir in Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent.³ Farrell's debt to Conrad, especially in his treatment of outsider figures, cannot be disputed;⁴ but, arguably, there are reasons for looking to L'Étranger as an equal, if not greater influence on Farrell's writing in this passage.

Gerhardt's mission appears to be a detached attempt to further the good of the Communist party by exposing a man who has betrayed it. However, Sayer's instincts prompt him to question Gerhardt's sincerity. As he listens to Gerhardt's news of Regan's approaching death he feels that 'There seemed to be genuine regret in his voice, but long experience and a certain wariness advised Sayer to suspend judgment until he knew what was in Gerhardt's mind' (p.21). Further into the interview Sayer suspects that the carefully selected references in the other man's argument had not been 'entirely innocent' (p.23). As he leaves, Sayer wonders 'whether [Gerhardt] really thought of the defamation of Regan as anything more than a pleasant game between two old friends' (p.24).

The theme of the vendetta between Gerhardt and Regan has often been compared with the famous quarrel, in 1951, between Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre; loyalty to the Communist party was central to this argument, too.⁵ The political ideas in the novel, also, would seem to be coloured more by post-war French thinking than by Conradian preoccupations. The most compelling comparisons, however, emerge from the detail of the Meursault/Raymond relationship in L'Étranger.

Personal revenge is the touchstone in both novels. In L'Étranger, Raymond has beaten up his 'sort of' mistress, and has been attacked by the girl's Arab brother. While Meursault shares his supper, drinks his wine and smokes his cigarettes, Raymond, as subtly as Gerhardt, draws him into a camaraderie which will exact revenge on the girl and will involve Meursault directly with the brother and, ultimately, in a murder. Details in the two narratives are remarkably similar. Raymond, like Gerhardt, suggests that 'there was some deceiving going on' on the girl's part (LE p.35); Raymond, although capable, does not feel able to 'write the kind of letter that was needed' (LE p.35), just as Gerhardt does not feel able to travel to Regan's house (AMFE p.35); and Raymond touches a personal nerve

by mentioning Meursault's mother, just as Gerhardt tries to refer to Sayer's non-existent family (AMFE p.36). The most important comparison, though, lies in the way in which both writers involve their protagonists in the lives and concerns of strangers

- Raymond, the Arab, the lawyers and the chaplain in L'Étranger, and Regan, Gretchen, Luc and Mado in A Man From Elsewhere - and by doing so, drive them even further into a world of unreality and unintelligible existence. As Sayer reflects, not yet realising the deeper significance: 'Everybody's deadly when you get to know them' (AMFE p.67).

Crane and Livett point out in Troubled Pleasures (p.42), that all Farrell's lone, male protagonists are 'men from elsewhere.' None more so in all the fiction than the man who is confined to an iron lung. This is true isolation of the kind which resembles the persistent metaphor which Farrell was to carry forward from his second novel, The Lung, into his next work and into the later trilogy - the paradox of the 'siege', where the individual is trapped inside, and yet shut out at one and the same time.

Farrell's own experience of this particular predicament is without doubt the catalyst for his second major work. The concept of imprisonment must surely have been working in his mind when he read the work of Camus, especially L'Étranger. As is clear, Meursault is already on the outside when he commits the murder of the Arab. Once taken into prison, he becomes the subject of what Prusse terms 'beleaguering' situations, commonly experienced by outsiders (pp.71 f.). The harassment of Meursault begins with questioning by his lawyer - not about the circumstances of the murder, but about his conduct at his mother's funeral. The language is hostile: 'disgusting', 'spitefully', 'very unpleasant', and 'angry' (LE p.65). Following quickly on is an interview with the magistrate. His questioning is 'without any apparent logic'; he is 'flustered'; he is 'brandishing' a crucifix in Meursault's face, demanding repentance (pp.67 f.). Even at visiting times when Meursault is able to see Marie, noise echoes off 'the huge, bare walls' and 'harsh light' is 'pouring down out of the sky' as if it were hostility personified. Other visitors are shouting at the top of their voices, and Meursault's message is 'drowned' by the man next to him (p.73). Meursault is feeling

'rather ill' and he would have 'liked to leave' (p.74). The intensity of this assault upon the consciousness is summed up in Meursault's later comment that 'a man who'd only lived for a day could easily live for a hundred years in a prison' (p.77).

Peering at his life through Sands' drunken consciousness, the reader sees that this man, for some reason, has placed himself on the outside; outside the city where he has studied and lived for twenty years - 'Oxford . . . A city of effete embryo Hitlers' (p.25), outside his job and outside his marriage. Sands has already become aware in the opening of the novel that 'The source of the trouble was in himself' (p.28). From the beginning, Farrell has marked his protagonist out as one with conscious and intelligent insight into his own condition and one who is ironically articulate about his discomfort. Meursault experiences the same unease, but his response is instinctive rather than reasoning; he feels rather than thinks. He has no access to the sophisticated irony which is engendered so readily in Farrell's characters.

Having been taken into hospital, Sands is assaulted by pain, by a 'bored nurse', by 'achingly white sheets'

and by probing doctors who threaten to perform a lumbar puncture. 'I'd rather be just left alone,' says Sands (p.47). His delirious consciousness is also assailed by images, thoughts and distorted memories; even by imagery from Farrell's own reading in the work of Richard Hughes: 'A fox was careering over the vanishing white wall of the hospital room. Red as blood in the snow, it seemed now, although perhaps its fur had been stained so scarlet by the passage of time . . . ' (p.48). The fox is to be used again in the narrative, specifically in Chapter 12, as an image of freedom for Sands (p.131). Perhaps Farrell was also thinking of Hughes' protagonist Augustine, who seemed to 'prize independence and isolation above everything.' ⁶ The close connection between Farrell's mental processes and those of his protagonist is exemplified by Sands' observation on the extent to which 'one's reactions to any emotional situation were conditioned by the books one had read. You reached a stage where you were no longer sure whether you were having the ideas or whether the ideas were having you' (p.68).

Freedom or escape preoccupies the mind of Meursault after his sentence has been pronounced. His thoughts

are tied to the problem of 'trying to escape from the mechanism', of 'escaping from the implacable machinery' (LE p.104). Driven by 'hope', he imagines 'chance' or 'luck' enabling him 'to change something'; but he realises that he will end up 'caught in the mechanism again' (p.105). Sands' longing for escape can only take him as far as a room on his own, that is, a more intense isolation. Like Meursault, he cannot react to those who care about him. ⁷ Offers of tablets to calm him down elicit a response which implies a deeper dis-ease than that of polio: 'I'm tired of temporary solutions' (TL p.131); and then an unexpected confession:

. . . [T]he illness kept me amused for a while. I don't want to sound dramatic but the simple truth is that . . . well, that I've exhausted the interest I once had in myself. And there's nothing else (p.132).

Meursault's and Sands' imprisonment has an existential metaphorical function in their respective narratives. Both protagonists represent the mind incarcerated in the body, and both are ultimately driven by their isolation to recognise the futility of their own existence. Here, however, the two philosophies

divide. Farrell does not, in the early fiction or in the first two Empire novels, follow Camus' thinking to a point at which resignation in this new awareness can lead to a state of exultation. Farrell's early outsiders - and this would include Boris Slattery in the third published novel, A Girl in the Head - leave the novel very much as they entered it, bewildered, uncomfortable and disillusioned, and without Meursault's 'hope'. This fundamental dilemma transfers to Troubles and to The Siege of Krishnapur.⁸

A turn in Farrell's philosophical progression, however, could arguably be signalled in the final chapter of The Singapore Grip. Margaret Drabble finds 'hope for the future' in this chapter; and Lawrence Bristow-Smith would endorse this view: '. . . [B]eneath the pessimism there is an essential strand of hope . . .'.⁹

Bristow-Smith points to Farrell's very obvious symbolism in the stray dog named 'The Human Condition' which slips the lead and makes for the captain's bridge on the last ship leaving the port, its place for freedom assured. Whether or not Farrell intended to develop this into something closer to Camus' vision in his unfinished novel, The Hill Station, cannot be known.

'The typical Farrell man fails . . . ', observes Neil McEwan in his Perspective in British Historical Fiction Today (p.129).¹⁰ None fails more comprehensively than Boris Slattery in Farrell's third novel, A Girl in the Head. Meursault has failed in L'Étranger; but his aims have been modest - to go to work, to eat, drink, smoke and to be with his girlfriend occasionally and to enjoy a day at the seaside. Life, time, other people and the social and religious conventions of his own society form a conspiracy to defeat an unremarkable man. Farrell takes this a stage further and asks: what would happen if you take a complex individual with a seething interior life, frustrate him with the old conspiracy at every turn of his frenetic attempts to achieve some resolutions in his own human predicament; then enlarge the preoccupation with sex, and add a substantial measure of irony? And then defeat him?

The novel opens using a, by now, established pattern; presenting a man who is already an outsider and who is already in some state of siege. Boris, unhappily married, lonely and at odds with his mental and physical condition, is exhibiting symptoms of imprisonment - 'incarcerated with the Dongeon family'

(p.54) - and expressing feelings of isolation - 'alone in emptiness and chaos'(p.71). Maidenhair Bay, 'the cemetery' of all initiative and endeavour' (p.15) and Boscobel, 'a Victorian mansion' (p.11), enclose him as surely as Sands is bound in his iron lung and Meursault is imprisoned in his death cell.

In the opening pages, Boris is shown as trapped, like Sands and Meursault, within concentric circles of confinement; in the branches of a sycamore tree, at Boscobel, in Maidenhair Bay. The tree has been easy to scale; but Boris has failed to secure a method for his descent, and it becomes apparent that the protagonist in this novel is being shown as stretched out on the symbol of his own isolation. Sands' iron lung and Meursault's prison cell are parallel symbols here. Boris begins to see the tree as suffering from Parkinson's disease, as its leaves innocently tremble in the breeze (p.166). And as his aspirations are slowly dying themselves, he envisages the sycamore as 'invisibly drowning in quick-drying cement beneath the soft, autumn sun'(p.208). In the final pages of the narrative it seems that Boris, as a coda to the episode in which he finds Inez and Maurice together on the beach, and as a signal of his own failure, has felled his tree. 'It was thought best

not to bring the matter up with Boris. He had become so silent and withdrawn during the last few days (p.220).¹¹

The sycamore also provides another level of symbolism for the outsider; for it is from this tree that Boris, failing in his own life, passively observes the lives of others using the double-distancing technique afforded by a pair of binoculars. As Crane and Livett point out, Boris is a spectator (p.55); he does not ever engage successfully in his own life. He watches films where he would be the lone hero; he watches the circus full of acts of adventure and daring, in which he would be the man with his 'black boots, armed only with a whip and a wooden stool' (p.113); and he bores a hole in his bedroom floor so that he can be a voyeur above the room occupied by Inez, 'the object of his love' (p.173) and Sandro. 'Boris, an ageing lover of beauty, was lying on the hard wooden floor, aware of his uncomfortably cooling limbs and the depth of his weariness . . . (p.173). The protagonist of L'Étranger, too, is a watcher. In Chapter 3 he watches his own existence being dissected in the court. In his cell, alone and awaiting his execution, he can 'see the sky and nothing else. I spend all day watching its complexion

darken as day turns to night' (LE p.104). He imagines himself confined to a hollow tree, 'with nothing to do but look up at the bit of sky overhead . . . (p.75); and he experiences 'the peculiar impression of being watched by myself' (p.83). These are all symptoms of the problem which Meursault shares with Boris, that is, impotence. Neither man can effectively do anything to change his predicament; and the failure here is centred on an inability to find a level of communication with others.

Meursault's frustrated attempts to connect with other characters have already been discussed in the previous chapter. Ultimately, he rejects not only those who are associated with his trial and imprisonment, but even Marie, Raymond and C  leste. Happy in his rebellion, he relishes the vision of a crowd of spectators, himself watched at last, greeting his execution with 'cries of hatred' (LE p.117). Boris' failure to communicate, as Anna Cich  n observes (pp.29 f.), drives him also into an imaginary world. But Farrell creates for him a much more complex structure of obsessions, dreams and delusions. And just as Meursault finally becomes articulate enough to state his challenge to the world, so Boris in a series of interior monologues

effectively explores for himself the misery which he fails to explain to others. As Crane and Livett note (p.66), Boris is a highly articulate communicator with himself. It is in his extended monologues that he is able to frame the language for his existentialist feelings of pain and meaninglessness. He also voices some of Farrell's perceptions on the subject of history.

The trouble about looking at these old photographs is that history leaks into the present through insignificant details. Here we see a pair of trousers at half-mast, there some bearded bloke in the background is consulting a turnip watch . . . It's the details that are so distressing. When I look at myself now in the light of these old pictures I get a most disagreeable sensation of being nothing but a detail myself . . . Of course . . . it's nonsense to think of one's life as a meaningless detail rapidly receding into a mass of other meaningless details. But I confess that the thought has occurred to me from time to time (p.26).

The outsider in the context of history is an arresting Farrellian concept. Boris' musings also foreshadow some of the writer's preoccupations in the Empire novels.

They turned into a street of imposing Victorian houses, façades decorated with ornate masonry. What had happened to all the large, solid families who had once lived in these houses? They had been so sure that living in solid houses at the centre of a vast Empire they had a foot wedged in the door of eternity. Boris could find

no satisfaction in the thought that they had deluded themselves (p.87).

The undermining of delusions which have been built up earlier in the narrative is very much a part of the deliberate anti-climax written into the endings of the early novels and also into the last pages of Troubles and The Siege of Krishnapur. The two Empire protagonists, the Major and the Collector, are left at the end of their respective narratives residing only a little uncomfortably in reflections on their own disappointment. For the Major, the 'lady of white marble was the only bride [he] succeeded in bringing back with him from Ireland' (T p.446). His thoughts of Sarah still perch inside him 'like a sick bird' until finally he is left 'at peace' (T p.446). Culture for the Collector is now 'a sham . . . It's a cosmetic painted on life by rich people to conceal its ugliness' (SK p.313). And he knows that 'a nation, does not create itself according to its own best ideas, but is shaped by other forces, of which it has little knowledge' (SK p.313). Unlike Matthew Webb in the final novel of the trilogy, looking forward with hope because his ideals are still intact, Archer and Hopkins seek nothing more. Only resignation is left.

Besieged within his interior world, Boris' imagination is preoccupied with the delusion that he can successfully pursue women. Slipping an old boatman two half-crowns, he does achieve some kind of sexual adventure in a varnished, but still drying boat with spotty, under-aged June from the Capri café. His failure is not in the pursuit, but in the fulfilment of an exalted experience. He feels 'cheated'. '[D]espair crawled up slowly through the roads of his body like columns of exhausted refugees'(p.97). But this is just a prelude to the shock Boris undergoes when his pursuit of Inez - a parody, it has to be acknowledged, of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita rather than any part of Farrell's reading of Camus - ends in his discovery of her coupled with his brother-in-law, Maurice. Here is the true failure; this girl has to remain in his head, not in his bed.

There is, in this context, an underlying connection with Camus, though. It is that for both novelists' protagonists women and sex turn out to be yet one more 'beleaguering' situation. Meursault's relationship with Marie is a casual connection - a chance meeting with the office typist on a beach, a Fernandel film

and a one-night affair. Outsiders do not really connect with women.

That evening, Marie came round for me and asked me if I wanted to marry her. I said I didn't mind and we could do if she wanted to. She then wanted to know if I loved her. I replied as I had done once already, that it didn't mean anything but that I probably didn't. 'Why marry me then,' she said. I explained to her that it really didn't matter She then remarked that marriage was a serious matter. I said, 'No.' (p.44).

Meursault's indifference to the question of a permanent, more profound partnership with a woman is part of his indifference to the rest of his world; it is on a level with his view of his mother's death. While in prison he warms to the sight of his girl-friend at visiting time; but when facing death, it doesn't matter that 'Marie now had a new Meursault to kiss' (p.116).

For Farrell's outsiders women and sex are another of life's tempting games played with the odds heavily weighed against winning. It might be suspected that the writer's own difficult temperament and discouraging experiences with women bit more deeply into the soul

of his fiction than was the case with Camus.¹² However, Meursault's farewell to his relationship with Marie finds echoes in Sayer's observation of Gretchen's train disappearing, in Sands' final rejection of marriage with his 'ex-stepdaughter . . . It was just terrible' (p.207), and in Boris' revelation of the promiscuity of Inez. All of these episodes, placed prominently in the final pages of the narrative, presage the importance which Farrell was to give to this theme later in his work.

It is only in the early novels that any kind of warm or sympathetic portraiture of women is to be found. Arguably these lie in the characterisation of Mado in A Man From Elsewhere and Monica in The Lung, though these portrayals of women are relatively thinly drawn. As he moves away from the immediate influence of other writers, Farrell tends to pair his weak, ineffectual men with determined and decisive women. We see the beginnings of this trend in A Girl in the Head. It should be emphasised that it is especially in this context that Farrell's outsiders consistently reveal themselves to be inadequate. Even the weaker female characters, such as Louise in The Siege of Krishnapur and Angela in Troubles, and the

more responsive women such as Vera in The Singapore Grip, place their male counterparts in situations where they become men who are confused and depressed. The more predatory women, like Sarah, Faith and Charity in Troubles and Joan Blackett in The Singapore Grip, seem to be depicted with a measured fury which can only have been born in the writer's own relationships. In the context of the Empire fiction, Farrell's bibliography for his last completed novel interestingly acknowledges the recorded observations of old colonialists some of whom have argued that the very fabric and aims of Empire were subverted by the arrival and behaviour of British women.¹³ Certainly, in the trilogy there is a widening discrepancy between Camus' and Farrell's view of sex. In L'Étranger, sex is a trivial and easily acquired commodity, not worth a description. There is only one sexual act in the whole of Farrell's trilogy; that is between Matthew and Vera in the last novel, and this is not achieved without difficulty and frustration; significantly, it is dominated by Vera's tendency to lecture. Farrell is closest to Camus' narrative use of women as sexual partners in the two earliest novels - in the opening scene in A Man From Elsewhere, for example,

and in Sands' implied attitudes to women in The Lung. To the true existentialist outsider, women 'really don't matter'.

Neither Camus nor Farrell restricts the outsider image to the protagonists. The outsider is a universal phenomenon and can be observed by other outsiders. Secondary outsiders in L'Étranger uncomfortably mirror aspects of Meursault's own pain or indifference. Paradoxically, there are outsiders within the small home where his mother has died; for example, the caretaker, an inmate himself, who refers to other residents as 'they', 'the others' and 'the old people' (pp.13 f.). Thomas Perez, his mother's friend in the home, is an outsider at the funeral, lame and 'fifty yards behind us' and fainting 'like a dislocated dummy' as the earth is tossed onto the coffin (pp.20 ff.). As we see consistently in Farrell's Empire narratives, outsiders are thrown into cruel relief inside the most closely-knit of enclaves. Meursault's neighbourhood offers another demonstration of this in the lives of Salamano, who beats his dog, but has 'got used to it' (p.47), and Raymond, who beats his woman, but 'still felt like sleeping with her' (p.34). These characters,

like Meursault, offer complex patterns of inexplicable compulsions and unorthodox behaviour; their lives, like Meursault's, are beyond reasonable understanding even by the individuals themselves.

Luc is the secondary outsider in Farrell's first novel, and is given considerable space within which to define himself. He has ambivalent feelings towards women; especially towards Mado, his mistress, with whom he can hardly share the beauty of a morning (p.26); he feels he 'can't afford to be nice to her' (p.28). Luc mirrors Sayer's feelings: 'Sayer reflected that he really knew very little about women' (p.122). Luc also runs away wishing, like Meursault and like Sands later, to become a 'free' man (p.142). He articulates Farrell's own thoughts, perhaps, as he ponders the colonial troubles in Algeria, and takes the side of an Algerian Arab being refused service in a café (p.161). He feels, in his encounter with the girl Monique that '... [I]n a way he did not really exist. He was merely a piece of living meat' (p.168). Sayer, observing Luc's meaningless life, recognises similarities in his own - 'the same barren soliloquies' (p.150).

The Lung brings Farrell's secondary outsiders back

onto the same level of perspective as those in L'Étranger. Exmoore, Harris, Wilson and Rivers only inhabit half of the novel and, like Salamano, Raymond and Marie, are not presented to the reader except in the context of the life and consciousness of the protagonist. They resemble Camus' secondary characters, too, in the way in which they 'ghost' the experiences and the thoughts of the central outsider, reinforcing his troubled perceptions and his disillusion. Their psychological peculiarities are simply the human condition writ large.

Exmoore, like Sands, disguises his despair with irony; he, too, has lost his belief in his own faith and work - an ex-minister just as Sands is an ex-journalist and an ex-husband. There had been 'one or two minor disasters of a doctrinal nature' (p.100), and he had become 'Just a little excitable' (p.98). Sands, reduced by his disease to a self-consciously helpless 'demi-skeleton' regards Harris, the ex-England bowler, made redundant by age, depressed and living by proxy through old photographs and newspaper clippings:

As a younger man, Sands reflected, he must

have been exceptionally good-looking . . . But with the loss of his hair the wrinkles of his forehead seemed to have climbed further . . . each one increasing the impression of anxiety (p.102).

Harris' now-distant achievements and Rivers' fixation with sex remind Sands of himself:

'Seducing women is the only thing I ever really seem to have done of any significance, I suppose' (p.117). The tragic suicide of Wilson, who has tried unsuccessfully to 'free' himself by buying postcards obsessively and by slashing car tyres in the village, brings Sands to the realisation that 'Death is the end of a dubious reality' (p.189), or, seen through Exmoore's crazed irony, that they are all 'the heroes that stuffing is made of' (p.154). Sands, watching the scenes in his ward with 'resignation and indifference', is also aware that these men are magnifying his own pessimistic view of the human condition, and that he is close to 'swinging from the chandelier like the rest of them' (p.150). Life, time, unbelief, sex, freedom, angst and suicide, all these existentialist issues are exercised by secondary characters in Farrell's novel. Sands emerges from this interaction, significantly at Easter time, concluding,

like Meursault, that it might be possible to be 'better off dead' (p.206).

An ex-doctor, in the same shadowy circumstances as Exmoore - 'Alcohol on my breath? They were damn right I had alcohol on my breath' (p.31) - Dr. Cohen is the single secondary outsider in Farrell's third novel; and the first in a line of eccentric, outspoken, failed or failing doctors who feature repeatedly in the Empire fiction.¹⁴ He is cynical, markedly misanthropic - 'Crowds . . . The bastards are everywhere. And when I think that I spent most of my life trying to stop them dying . . . ' (p.30).

- and misogynistic - 'Women? You can't be serious. The act of sex? Nothing but the automatic coupling of two machines . . . ' (p.31). Boris is comfortable only with this practised, other outsider; and he begins to learn from the doctor the pragmatic view of life, developing into existential indifference, which provides an anodyne prescription for the pain that is existence. When Cohen takes Boris to a hospital gymnasium where young patients are trying to exercise their wasted limbs (a scene in which Boris seems be gazing across the novels towards Sands), the doctor tries to deflect and stiffen Boris' pity. The contrast

between the two men shows Boris to be only a 'beginner' outsider.

When you look at those people you don't see them, you see great dramas of suffering and pain and heroism . . . But that's all nonsense, perfectly irrelevant . . . Part of the machinery has gone out of action. And that's all there is to it. Nothing else . . . I'm trying to help you, Boris . . . I'm just trying to make it easier for you (pp.88 ff.).

Boris' outsider-mentor concludes: 'I used to be rather like you . . . All misery is invented . . . Happiness, too, I daresay' (p.89).

By the time Cohen is dying of drink, Boris has graduated, through other experiences, to a fully-qualified state of outsider-existentialism. Echoes are heard of The Lung again, and of Harris, as Boris regards the once 'very handsome young man' in the old man's face. The narrator reminds us: 'Time passed' (p.169). But this episode seems even more strongly redolent of L'Étranger and of Meursault's feelings about his mother as Boris reflects that he could 'find no sense of tragedy or grief about his death' (p.170).

As has been noted, Boris is a more complex

character, gifted with a more articulate sense of self than Meursault; but the sentiment is identical. Some of Cohen's last words, too, could have been uttered by Camus' protagonist: 'I'm dying at last I'm happy to say ' (p.170).

In his comments in the Afterword to L'Étranger, Camus defines his protagonist engaging every term for heroism except the word hero. Meursault is a man who 'refuses to lie'; he has 'a passion for an absolute and for truth'; his story is the story of a man 'who, without any heroic pretensions, agrees to die for the truth.' Camus adds: '. . . [M]y character is the only Christ we deserve' (p.119). The story of Meursault is also one of a Christ-like victim; a victim of circumstances, of anger and vengeance properly belonging to others, a victim of society's laws, religion and conventions and a victim of his own honesty and inability to be anything but true to himself. This protagonist has strong heroic attributes, but is besieged by an unjust and absurd world.

Farrell's first novel begins with a quest for truth. Sayer is searching on two levels; first, by proxy on a removed political level, a search which

is coloured by malice and by a personal sense of vengeance on the part of another man; secondly, on a level running much deeper within the protagonist himself, a search into the life and being of Regan and of those who most closely surround him. But Sayer's endeavours are always undercut. The novel ends with his lonely figure at a railway station, against the background of a receding train, his efforts to secure the girl and the means with which to disgrace Regan disappearing into a maze.

One of the key episodes in the novel, the attack upon Sayer on a beach - so close in many respects to Camus' novel - is central to Farrell's and to Camus' concept of heroism as compromised by the untidy reality of the modern world. Farrell's account of this incident is surely related to Homer's verse, in The Iliad, on the death of Hector. The youths from the bar strip Sayer, as Hector is stripped by Achilles' men; they tie Sayer's ankles to their motor-bike with a rope, as Achilles attaches Hector's ankles to his chariot with leather straps; dust rises from Hector's dragging body, as sand spurts from the motor-cycle and from Sayer's naked form; and Gretchen screams at the youths, as Hector's mother, Hecabe, screams at the

Greeks. ¹⁵ Homer's epic account of heroism is graced with a sense of great tragedy and with the lamentation of a noble race of men. Sayer's heroic essay comes to very little: 'Sayer had not been killed' (p.140). Gretchen, alone, watches a prosaic scene as some German students 'dried him methodically with a towel . . . and, having dusted the sand from his clothes, helped him to dress' (p.141). Gretchen juxtaposes the incident in her imagination with the approaching death of Regan. 'There were no compensations and no miracles . . . and nothing had been gained. The evening was now well and truly over' (p.141).

The sense of bathos which accompanies the 'heroic' moments of Farrell's men has been noted by Crane and Livett in Troubled Pleasures. They remark upon a recurrent technique in the narratives of undercutting the protagonist's heroic stance with the last sentence in the passage (p.40). As an example, they highlight Luc's defence of the Algerian Arab in a café. As if anticipating Boris' delusions in A Girl in the Head, Luc sees himself in a Western film, '. . . the hero flinging open the door of the saloon.' Farrell significantly notes Luc's feeling of 'absurdity'. 'Nobody had paid the slightest attention to his entry'

(p.164). Crane and Livett suggest that this is akin to irony. It is from this, surely, that Farrell's distinctive ironical humour develops in the later novels. Boris' drunken visions of his own heroism in the cinema end with the usher's torch shining into his face as he is ordered out. Boris 'wondered whether he should get up and punch the man . . . But he felt too tired. Really, he thought, I feel abominably tired' (p.56). The bathos at the end of this passage in Farrell's third novel is now heavy not only with absurdity, but with comic irony. Farrell goes on to develop and refine this technique in his Empire fiction, undercutting the fictional romanticism of his protagonists' 'heroic' actions with the uncomfortable compromises of everyday reality; for example, Archer, the lover, reaching out to steady himself as he attempts to kiss Angela, and putting 'his hand down firmly on a cactus . . . ' (T p.11); Major Hogan, rallying himself to shout the first orders in combat, taking a musket ball between his brown teeth and into his skull (SK p.140); or Matthew Webb, invited to his first dinner at the Blacketts, impressing a fellow-guest with the dimensions of a river in which he had successfully fished for trout, delivering Mrs.Blackett 'a blow in the stomach that

robbed her of breath for a moment or two' (SG p.128).

For Farrell, life places a vast abyss between the outsider's dreams and illusions of heroism and his actual achievement of it. It is the incompatibility between the two which creates the victim. Farrell tests this theme, perhaps unrealistically and unconvincingly in his first novel; it is fed and enlarged by the physical and emotional frustrations thrown up directly by Sands' circumstances in The Lung; it is most strongly exercised in the third novel where it becomes the basic charge for the comedy in the narrative. Boris is an anti-hero for whom heroism is consistently a mere delusion. As Crane and Livett define it, Farrell's view would be that 'Heroism exists only as a discourse constructed by society, in which it is no longer possible to believe' (p.53). This is where the creator of Sayer, Sands and Boris moves away from Camus; and it is also why Farrell's early novels end in disillusion and resignation whereas L'Étranger finishes on a peal of exultation. Camus does still believe in the heroic life and in acts of heroism, although he concedes that these things will force the individual into becoming a victim of society. Farrell's early outsiders, although made of heroic stuff as

Exmoore's joke implies, are prevented from taking even the first step on the heroic ladder, and are made victims anyway. This view transfers to the first two Empire novels. What does emerge from Farrell's protagonists is an anti-heroism which is closer to the philosophy found in the dramas of Samuel Beckett than to Camus - the heroic, resigned endeavour to keep struggling pessimistically on. Interestingly, the third Empire novel turns aside from this concept in its final pages. This kind of anti-heroism as seen in Matthew Webb, Farrell seems to be suggesting, does not necessarily have to be resigned or pessimistic. There is another development in Farrell's last work, too. The unfinished The Hill Station, though still dealing with the problems of a heroic outsider, shows the writer to be relinquishing the despair-covering cosmetic of ironic humour - already seen to be diminishing in The Singapore Grip - in favour of a more earnest and positive narrative tone; more akin to that of A Man From Elsewhere than that of A Girl in the Head, Troubles or The Siege of Krishnapur. The question must remain unanswered as to whether or not Farrell was turning back to a view of the outsider closer to Camus' Meursault; but the beginnings of some affirmative signs are there.

The outsider, then, seen as a victim-hero in Farrell's early fiction and in Camus' L'Étranger, is a universal individual driven by his own human identity to remain himself and by his aspirations not only to survive but to transcend his circumstances. Yet he is assailed by relationships, disease, death and the rigid norms of society, he is 'manacled' to the opposite sex, as Sands points out, 'by desire' without finding anything in common (TL p.35), and he faces likely defeat. The metaphor which Farrell develops for this human predicament, and which supports his later and more refined work, is the siege. Farrell, in an interview following the publication of The Siege of Krishnapur, defines the siege concept and the plight of the outsider at the same time:

A siege is a microcosm of real life and
[the] human condition - hostility all
round you with the individual in a
rather temporary shelter.

CHAPTER 4

DISEASE AND DEATH AS METAPHORS
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The siege-universal is the strongest link between Farrell's novels and the existentialist work of Albert Camus. Parallels within The Siege of Krishnapur and La Peste are manifold. ¹ Long before he had begun to write his second Empire novel, as Lavinia Greacen records (p.271), Farrell confided to a friend that his ambition was to match the achievement of Camus' novel about an Algerian town besieged by the most deadly of diseases - plague. In both novels siege and sickness are the dominant symbols. However, in existentialist terms, where Camus sees human plague as necessitating a defensive siege, Farrell's concept of sickness, in The Siege of Krishnapur, suggests symbolically that it emerges from the siege of the human condition, that it is one of the elements of the universal siege.

Although this philosophy finds its fullest and most complex expression in The Siege of Krishnapur, is operating dynamically in the other trilogy novels, and was surely intended to be developed in the un-

finished The Hill Station, the existential view of disease as part of Man's predicament informs all three of Farrell's early novels, too.

The opening chapters of A Man From Elsewhere are imbued with a sense of the decay of things; of rooms, buildings, clothing, metro carriages and other people. Sayer notes, as he travels towards the home of the dying Regan in St.Guilhem, how the elderly peasants sitting in the bus manifest the decay and the ravages of merely having lived. The life of the man sitting beside him is expressed in his hands:

Dirt was ingrained in the skin and the fingers twisted and knotted as if they had been suddenly frozen in a movement of agony . . . these old hands had been twisted and broken by tyranny just as surely as in any of the stories of torture during the war (AMFE p.40).

The power of the language - 'agony', 'tyranny' and 'torture' intimates more than Sayer's concerns, ambiguous as they are in any case, for the working man. Living in Oran, Camus states in his opening to La Peste, is an 'ugly' and 'uninspiring' thing. The changing seasons offer alternatives of only baking houses or 'deluges of mud'. The writer

describes the town in terms of negatives: '. . . a town without pigeons, without any trees or gardens, where you never hear the beat of wings or the rustle of leaves . . . (LP p.5). The town offers no respite or comfort for the sick:

. . . [A]t Oran the violent extremes of temperature, the exigencies of business, the uninspiring surroundings, the sudden nightfalls, and the very nature of its pleasures call for good health. An invalid feels out of it there. Think what it must be for the dying man, trapped behind hundreds of walls all sizzling with heat. (LP p.7).

The reader's expectation is being primed by both writers for what is to follow in the main body of the text - in Farrell's writing the ultimate decay of one old man, in Camus' narrative the account of a thousand sufferings from disease. Both writers are also employing metaphors which stand for an assault upon the living by life itself, the final battle being that against death.

The degradation of human life is emphasised in Camus' account by the detailed description of the physical symptoms of the plague. Vomiting, high fever and delirium are referred to; the ganglions appear, beginning to suppurate and splitting open 'like over-ripe fruit'. In a detached style, Camus recounts,

as his protagonist doctor might do, the lancing of abscesses: 'Two criss-cross strokes, and the ganglion disgorged a mixture of blood and pus . . . Dark patches appeared on their legs and stomachs: . . . Usually the sick man died, in a stench of corruption' (LP p.35).

Degradation and disgust are marked in Farrell's references to Regan's disease, too. However, the writer involves in those references the two characters who are the most bound, emotionally and intellectually, to the dying man. The wretchedness and the revulsion of the onlookers become synthesised in the narrative with the decay of the victim. Working through Gretchen's, a woman's consciousness first, Farrell describes her sitting in a darkened room, contemplating 'the sordid daylight horror of the man dying over her head'. Regan was dying 'with a disgusting animal growing in the filth of his body . . . ' (p.34). Gretchen has to be 'alone with the misery which possessed her' (p.35). Sayer, regarding the decaying body in front of him, the features 'frozen in anonymity', has to remind himself that 'this was Sinclair Regan' (p.171). Farrell, moving away from the shocking, albeit clinical

description of Camus, uses the imagery of the inanimate to express the effect of Regan's disease on Sayer. The yellowish skin which stretched over his features 'had the transparent quality of thin china'; the skull was so fragile a finger could pass through it 'as easily as through an eggshell'; and the voice was 'as thin and sharp as a razor' (p.171). Primitive animal life also furnishes Farrell's description with unpleasant imagery. Regan's pulse is discerned in a 'palpitating grey vein (which) wormed over his temple . . . '(p.171); and he also notes 'An emaciated hand (which) worked itself painfully over the coverlet . . . like a crab' (p.171). The effect on the protagonist is as great as that on the reader. 'Sayer felt unbearably oppressed and found the air too heavy to breathe' (p.172).

At several points during his account of the plague, Camus and Dr. Rieux describe in detail how, by stages, the sickness strips not only the life, but the very being from the victim. He uses widely-differing individuals - a porter (LP pp.21 ff.), a nameless boy (LP pp.127 ff.) and a Jesuit priest, Father Paneloux (LP pp.214 ff.) - to demonstrate

this. In the last of these, perhaps especially emphasised because the priest denies his condition throughout, the narrator traces the slow, relentless withdrawal of the life-force from the individual - from a feeling of being 'more run down than ever, mentally as well as physically' to episodes of 'restlessness' and grating coughing, to exhaustion and a still, 'deathly pallor', a state of being 'more dead than alive'. Farrell, on the other hand, is intent on showing Regan, the writer and intellectual, as slowly surrendering his discipline and creative energy to his illness; decay not only ravages the physical force of peasants, it drains the sharpest minds. Regan contemplates this as he slumps in his study chair in front of a desk piled with unfinished work:

All afternoon he had felt his energy draining relentlessly away, a slow leak which had started in the region of his tortured stomach but which had sent curling currents progressively further into his limbs, sucking the force up from his legs and down from the muscles of his neck and shoulders, washing energy and self-discipline together into that expanding vortex of nothingness at the centre of his body. (AMFE p.105).

Despairingly, Regan realises that not only sickness,

but mere ageing changes the man and changes the truths he once held to. 'In his dejection he could see nothing but chaos, self-delusion and fatigue' (p.105). Human existence, in the end, is empty and futile. ²

Coupled with the concept of the inevitability of decay and disease in the living individual is Regan's belief, as reported by Luc (p.98) that, specifically in the twentieth century, men have to face up to a plague of 'mass ideas, mass culture'. Significant in its terms, this threat is described as being made up of anonymous 'organisms'; for example, 'industrial corporations, sociétés anonymes, political parties'. In order to combat this disease of twentieth century, men must become 'selfish' and oppose group thinking by choosing isolation; this would become a 'state of grace', and the outsider would be seen as a 'hero'. Farrell is generating here the root-concepts for his argument in The Singapore Grip, to be published fifteen years later. For this is the story of Matthew Webb, outsider and unorthodox thinker, physically laid low on his dripping mattress by la grippe, the local

fever, but also assaulted in his conscience and his sense of moral rightness by the feverish commercialism of the European entrepreneurs in Singapore. As if on a quest throughout the novel for the truth of the term which has been haunting him since his arrival - "Don't forget to watch out for the Singapore grip" (p.102) - he sees, as in a revelation, the real meaning of those words:

"I know what it is! It's the grip of our Western culture and economy on the Far East. . . . It's the stranglehold of capital on the traditional culture of Malaya . . . It's the doing things our way . . . It's the pursuit of self-interest rather than of the common interest" (SG p.523).

By this stage in the development of his writing, Farrell has shifted the images of decay and sickness from Camus' work and his own early novels to political, social and military metaphors. The inclusion of 'The Human Condition', though, the starving and mange-ridden dog which escapes the invading grip of the Japanese on the island, suggests that in the writer's mind disease still has existentialist resonances.

The central metaphor in La Peste emerges from the confession of Rieux's friend, Tarrou: ". . . I had plague already, long before I came to this town

. . . I had an indirect hand in the deaths of thousands of people' (LP pp.228, 233). The pervasive sickness in the novel of hundreds of individuals symbolising the universality of the condition, is emphasised in Tarrou's statement:

. . . [W]e can't stir a finger in this world without the risk of bringing death to somebody . . . each one of us has the plague within him; . . . no one on earth, is free from it (LP pp. 234 f.).

In Rieux's final thoughts on plague, at the end of the novel, as a never-dying bacillus, Camus is suggesting that the collective condition is eternal. He asserts that there can never be a 'final victory' (LP p.284); Man's state demands that he accept never-ending misery. Of Farrell's three early novels it is The Lung which demonstrates the influence of this existentialist belief most clearly.

It has to be acknowledged that Farrell's own trauma, arising from disease and reverberating throughout his life, has a very substantial impact on this strongly autobiographical novel. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that his view of the human condition as a collective and varying phenomenon owes

as much to Camus' philosophy as to his own experience.

In moving from his first novel to The Lung, Farrell brings his main characters together into a much closer physical and emotional bonding. A Man From Elsewhere presents strongly delineated individuals who speak separately to the reader in different chapters, who enclose themselves in lonely rooms and reflect alone on their lives, and who run away to be free. In The Lung Farrell places in close confinement a core of five men who impact directly upon one another and who each represent aspects of human decay and disease which together make up the universal predicament.

The portrayal of Sands explores the physical agonies of disease from near-death to recovery, in minutely remembered detail.

Nothing at all was moving in his chest
except his accelerating heart
I'm breathing in now, Sands lied to
himself. I'm breathing out now
His head was beginning to spin and
his fists were clenched (TL p.103).

Breathing is the central function for the physical being; yet half of the novel probes Sands' turbulent

efforts to relate to other people - to women in particular. '... he also knew from bitter experience that one couldn't care for other people simply by wanting to ' (p.107). The dual examination of Sands' condition signals that this book does not just use the human body as 'a fragile, vulnerable organism', an 'omni-present motif', as Ronald Binns would suggest, but that the mind and the emotions must be seen as equally dis-eased. This is borne out by the development of the other patient-characters in Sands' world. All represent a synthesis of physical and mental problems.

Harris is a case of clinical depression; but his problems arise from the frustrations in an ageing sportsman. 'Sport is fine for a young man but when you begin to get past it . . . ' (p.100). Rivers, 'pushing seventy' is also 'a bit past it', and suffers from sexual obsession. '... I imagine his mind to be a complete blank across which a naked woman flits from time to time,' comments Exmoore (p.113). The minister himself has an unexplained ragged scar on his head; but his undermining problems relate to his inability to believe in himself, God or anything any more. Standing with the others he claims, expressing more of the truth than he intends: 'There was never

anything wrong with us. Except maybe Wilson' (p.99). In Wilson, Farrell portrays the disease of the human mind - a man who mutters to himself, who draws pictures of cars which have 'front bumpers like ragged teeth' (p.121), and who believes that he was brought to hospital by a car which 'killed many children playing in the street on the way' (p.99). Wilson, having secretly saved all his sleeping pills, was 'on a chute, slithering away into unreality' (p.189), and had taken the only cure for the disease of life - suicide. Suffering from the ultimate absurdity, Wilson is making a confession, as Camus describes it in Le Mythe de Sisyphe (p.13), that 'life is too much' and that he does 'not understand' it. It is significant that in this novel, Wilson is the only diseased character who resolves his problems. For the others the eternal misery grinds on. Exmoore, Harris and Rivers are left in the hospital as Sands is released. And for Sands there is no answer. 'Well, yes, he thought, why not? Perhaps. No. Yes. Perhaps. . . . It was just terrible' (p.207).

The unresolved ending which leaves the protagonist in a pessimistic, limbo-like state has by now begun to establish a pattern in Farrell's writing. Sayer's

circumstances have left him in such a predicament in A Man From Elsewhere; and Boris in A Girl in the Head will suffer the same treatment. This is one of the strangest features to transfer from the early novels to the trilogy. Major Archer is released, like Sands, from his 'siege', and is left more isolated than before; the only love in his life is the statue of Venus. The Collector, like Regan, loses his beliefs and perhaps, because unlike the others, he is able to look back across the long perspective of the passing years, he gives the clearest intimation of what toil, endeavour and endurance was needed to end up with nothing. For Matthew Webb, who has already been discussed in this context,⁴ there is a remnant of hope. But there is still the feeling of impossible challenges having been met, only to end in imprisonment. The overall mood of the novels is that of the break-up and defeat of integrity, that part of the heart and mind which is so difficult to defend. In La Peste Rieux touches on the philosophy of Camus' earlier novel, La Chute, when he concedes that life is a 'never-ending defeat' (LP p.123).⁵ Rieux also reminds us that '... [T]he habit of despair is worse than despair itself' (LP p.170).

Despair leads to the destruction of the mind.

The decay and break-up of the mind, as Prusse points out, leads to distorted concepts of reality in The Lung which, in turn, generate comedy.⁶ Despairing of their 'moralising, circular conversations', Exmoore persuades the men in the ward to make confessions:

Harris said: "I stole some biscuits from your cupboard the other day."

"You rotten bastard. You won't get any more for a week. That's your penance. How about you, Martin?"

Sands searched in his mind. "I've wasted my life for forty years. How about that?"

"Too boring and ordinary. Try again."

"I covet the sister, the old hag."

"Oh, well confessed!" cried Exmoore (TL p.146).

The wandering logicality of this still survives in an appreciation of Goon-ish and Pythonesque comedy today. The narrow borderland where humour, pity and horror meet and are distorted together is explored by Farrell in his third novel and is developed in the first two books of the trilogy. The writer places a challenge before the reader which involves making uncomfortable adjustments to the pity of life and its terrors. Are we to lament the plight of Boris, close to death on the stretcher, or is our sense of the comic tickled by his resemblance to a Sunday roast? Should we admire and smile at Fleury's resourcefulness in using the strings of a broken violin to kill his attacker; can

can we accept that a violin could feasibly be used as a lethal weapon? And can we tolerate a description of a civilized young man garrotting a native? Farrell's gift was to seize upon the surreal distortion that despair engenders and to create from it his own literary signature.

The setting for sickness and decay was a particularly strong preoccupation in Farrell's mind when he was writing the first and finished drafts for The Lung. His reading of Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain, after he had recovered from polio, filled the writer with a sense of recognition, as Lavinia Greacen recounts in her biography:

. . . [T]he setting of a Swiss sanatorium was hypnotic . . . the all-encompassing world in which personalities expanded and preoccupations narrowed down, where doctors were omnipotent and death and decay too tangible to ignore . . . the experiences of the narrator, Hans Castorp blended with his own (p.113).

There are strange anomalies in the text of The Lung which could arguably be explained by subconscious echoes from Farrell's reading of Mann's novel. For example, Sands' story begins at Easter; references to the sunshine and to the high temperature recur;

Sands leans against a church wall in 'a welcome patch of shade' (p.13). When polio strikes he is taken to the hospital which dominates the rest of the narrative. The hospital is close enough to reach quickly and to be the place of work of Marigold, his step-daughter. Yet unexpected references to snow begin to abound. In his drunken musings, as Marigold fills his feeding tube with whisky, Sands recollects that his wife's lover was sent 'to Switzerland to the sanatorium . . .' (p.94). And later as Sands, fully conscious and sober, looks southwards out of the window towards a cluster of trees, he notices 'the broad spine and jagged crests of a small mountain that glistened peacefully in the last light of the winter afternoon' (p.114). Winter or not, this jagged mountain would appear to be in the vicinity of Oxford. John Spurling discusses the influence of Thomas Mann on Farrell's work as; briefly, does Michael Prusse.⁷ There is enough comment on this aspect of Farrell's work not to be ignored. However, confining buildings and institutions of all kinds are part of the writer's stock-in-trade, and in this respect Camus' description of the prison and the rest home in L'Étranger surely also finds a place in his setting for The Lung.

The effects of glaring light deriving from Camus' description of the care home and of Meursault's prison

in L'Étranger, and reappearing in the despairing white light of Sands' ward in The Lung, have already been mentioned here.⁸ There are also comparisons between Farrell's book and Camus' novel in the way in which places where people sicken and die are shown to oppress the individual with their staff, their inmates, their rooms or wards, even their very furniture. For the outsider the effects, painfully perceived, are heightened. For Meursault, the continuous talk of the caretaker and the warden is a source of discomfort; he notes that the nurse wears a bandage below her eyes, and that 'where her nose should have been the bandage was flat.' 'It's a chancre she's got,' says the caretaker (LE p.12). In The Lung, Sands is inefficiently undressed 'by a plump, bored nurse' (TL p.46). She thrusts a thermometer too far under his tongue and makes him gag (p.49). His doctor is 'a man with a white face mask . . . ' standing beside the bed. 'You sound to me as if you don't care whether you're cured or not,' he comments (pp.46 f.). In L'Étranger the friends of Meursault's mother, other inmates, come 'gliding silently' into the mortuary; they cough, they weep, their bodies and faces are distorted and decayed, and Meursault has the impression that 'they were there to judge me' (pp.15,17). For Sands, a

patient himself, the doctor's words, '. . .

[T]here are also sicknesses of the mind' (TL p.47) are borne in upon his consciousness as he is introduced to the four men in his ward. Exmoore's careless comment, 'I bet you never saw such lunatics in all your life' (TL p.99) takes on a painful significance.

Camus uses inanimate detail, too, to bring pressure onto Meursault's consciousness; for example, the whiteness of the mortuary in which 'every angle and curve stood out so sharply that it was painful to the eyes' (LE p.15). The roof is made of glass and the furniture is minimal; '. . . [S]ome chairs and some cross-shaped trastles' supporting a coffin with 'a row of shiny screws' (LE p.12). Being carried into the hospital in The Lung, Sands notices a sign hanging by a solitary nail. 'The wood was worm-eaten and rotten. The odd thing about it was that it was pointing down into the lawn itself' (TL p.45). Sands, like Meursault, is frustrated by his surroundings - but more bitterly so because of his sense of imprisonment.

There was the same white ceiling, the same three lines where two walls and the ceiling met and at the same angle, the same steel promontory of the lung restricted his forward vision . . . As for the patch of grass that

was just visible, he rationed himself to one or two glances at it per day. The penalty of greed, he knew, would be familiarity. His prison would become complete (TL pp.104 f.).

In both narratives whiteness is a recurring agent of oppression and, paradoxically, of a sense of claustrophobia. This feature is found in Mann's The Magic Mountain as well; and it intensifies the impression of imprisonment as relentlessly as the empty stage in the dramas of Samuel Beckett. Release from this whiteness, even by means of a glance at green grass through a window, imparts some psychological uplift. Two passages from L'Étranger and The Lung, respectively, in which Meursault and Sands emerge for the first time from the rest home and the hospital, have similarities.

And the breeze coming up over the hills had a salty tang to it. It was going to be a beautiful day. It was a long time since I'd been out in the country . . . I waited in the courtyard, under a plane tree. I breathed in the fresh smells of the earth and I no longer felt sleepy (LE p.17).

Walking against the wind was hard work. Sands felt his face beginning to glow . . . The grass over which they were walking was still wet and spongy from the night's rain . . . But he was happier now. The walk against the wind had blown away some of the shadows (TL pp.184 ff.).

The natural images and the sense of a returned well-being bear close comparison in the two passages. For both protagonists, though, this interlude is only a kind of parole. The sentence of continuing decay, of spiritual and physical death, lies upon them. Sands notes, as he returns to his ward, that 'the wooden finger was still pointing firmly down into the clipped green lawn' (TL p.185).

Farrell's third novel, A Girl in the Head, explores further the theme of the stressed and diseased consciousness. There are few precedents for this in either L'Étranger or La Peste save for a minor character in the latter, Joseph Grand, who obsesses about the process of writing, and spends the duration of the plague-siege forming and re-working the same few phrases over and over again. ' "Oh doctor," he would exclaim, "How I'd like to learn to express myself." ' (LP p.46): he confides to Rieux that he has trouble 'finding words' (LP p.78). The universal issue of the individual finding expression for himself reappears in The Lung where Sands' therapy-novel, Where the Sunburn Ends, betrays the mental distortions which reflect the unbalanced consciousness of the patient himself. In A Girl in the Head, Boris' frustrated mind moves a stage further by re-arranging

and embroidering a romantically fictionalized account of his childhood into a tape-recorder (AGITH pp. 41 f.) - the resemblance to Beckett's Krapp is noticeable - and by mimicking the 'serpentine' nature of his relationship with his wife in matching patterns of prose twisting across the page (pp. 119 ff.).⁹ Sustaining the thematic link with writing, Farrell uses the confused wanderings of the mind of the insane beggar, Robertson, who crosses the two Lawrences - 'He was leading the Arabs in some sexual revolution' - to define the distortion of a mind in the last stages of disease (AGITH p.156).

Meursault's indifference to sickness and death in L'Étranger prefigures the cynical, brutally pragmatic reminders from Dr.Cohen that life is nothing more than the story of chemicals (AGITH p.45): 'Just like machines . . . And I was a sort of mechanic trying to repair them' (p.30). Boris, worried about the state of his failing heart and trying to preserve notions about men as noble beings whose hearts aspire to romantic love, is quickly rebuked by the doctor. ' "The heart's a muscle," retorted the doctor sharply. "That's all I know about the heart." ' (p.31). Death has no more significance than the decay of a lump of matter. In Meursault's and Cohen's view, it happens;

and it can be welcomed.

For Boris, though, as Anna Cichón points out,¹⁰ sickness is a continuing memento mori. He sees the whole world in terms of decay and death, projecting his thoughts onto all kinds of animate and inanimate subjects. Even the leaves on the tree are dying because ' . . . death is a built-in characteristic of all living things . . . ' (p.46). The passing of time equates to dying and, remembering in a drunken haze that it is winter, the season of death, Boris makes a mental note that Granny Dongeon 'would be sure to die this time'. As if parodying the opening of L'Étranger, he continues:

And she had only just made it through the last one. That would mean tears and long faces and everyone dressed in black. They would say he was heartless if he went out for a drink or showed any sign of enjoying himself (AGITH p.54).

Many commentators have debated the application of disease metaphors in the siege novels of Farrell's trilogy.¹¹ The majority conclude that the decline and fall of the British Empire is being described in the vivid images of decay. Clues in Farrell's

third novel already suggest this. Boris' reflection on the delusion of the men and women of Maidenhair Bay, believing themselves to be at the centre of a solid Empire (p.87), and his noting, redolent of James Joyce - perhaps the first Existentialist in France by virtue of his rejection of God and his determination to pursue his work, albeit as an outsider - that 'A smell of ashes and garbage hung in Empire Lane' (p.150), suggests that Farrell was already seeing Imperialist Britain, before the first book of the trilogy was prepared, in terms of decay, with the way forward strewn with garbage.¹² To rehearse the many incidences of decay-and-sickness metaphors in the Empire novels would be merely to repeat the work of early critics; and the central 'grippe' image in The Singapore Grip has already been dealt with in this chapter. Suffice it to say that the writer's portrayal of the weakening control of the British government over Irish affairs in Troubles in terms of the decay of the Majestic Hotel and its surroundings, and his images of rotting flesh, plagues of boils and insects and his exploration of the pathology of cholera in The Siege of Krishnapur, pointing to a fundamental sickness within the Raj, are unarguably central to these novels. It may also

be worth drawing attention to the fact that, although the siege metaphor had been left behind in Farrell's unfinished work, The Hill Station, sickness and disease as part of the collective experience was still working in his creative imagination.¹³ Also, the description of the burning of the Residency in his earlier 'Indian' novel - ' . . . like some mysterious sign isolating a contagion from the dark countryside . . . (SK p.127), reminds us that the plague in Camus' Oran was not too distant from his thinking.

A recurring element in Farrell's symbolism for disease and decay is the frequent reference to dogs. Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano, an influence on Farrell's writing in many ways,¹⁴ has surely left an imprint on the early and Empire novels from the 'hideous pariah dog' (UV p.69) which, diseased and starving, shadows the drunken Consul in his wanderings through Cuernavaca for nearly two hundred pages and which, in the final sentence of the novel, is thrown into a ravine after Firmin's dead body (p.376). Lowry quotes Bunyan's Grace Abounding for the Chief of Sinners at the beginning of his book:

Now I blessed the condition of the dog . . .
for I knew (it) has no soul to perish under
the everlasting weight of Hell or Sin, as

mine was like to do.

Lowry could not have had any input into A Man From Elsewhere since, as Ronald Binns (p.22) and Chris Ackerley (p.20) agree, Farrell came to Lowry's work only after he had written his first novel. Nevertheless, there is a remarkable reference to Regan's dog in this narrative, which is shot by the owner shortly before he dies. In doing this, Regan feels that he has 'deliberately severed the last chord which held me to the earth . . . at last I had created something' (AMFE p.183). The influence here could be the shooting of a flea-ridden spaniel by Cottard, near the end of La Peste as if to sever the last chord holding the people of Oran to disease (LP pp.280 ff.). Where Lowry's influence is strongest, in terms of dog-symbolism, can be seen in A Girl in the Head in the unattractive, cringeing yet tail-wagging Bonzo, the stray which attaches itself to Boris. 'Bonzo' is not the 'grotesque collapse of the imagination as regards animal nomenclature', as the narrator has it (AGITH p.62).

It originates, as do many strange details in Farrell's writing, in a remembered episode from his own life - a pledge to a dog from a drunk in a pub: 'I'll never

let you down, Bonzo.' ¹⁵ Having said this, in Farrell's novels, dogs which cannot be separated from their owners, as is the case with Bonzo in A Girl in the Head, may be traced back not only to Lowry, but also to Camus' L'Étranger, in the nameless dog belonging to Salamano. There are comparisons to be drawn in the portrayals of the two animals: both are ugly (LE p.30, AGITH p.62); both are diseased and disfigured (LE p.30, AGITH p.34); and both are unwanted (LE p.31, AGITH p.34). Salamano himself suggests the symbolic significance of the dog when he says: ' "He's always there." ' (LE p.31): and on his own body he manifests the disease which the dog carries: 'Salamano has ended up looking like the dog. He's got reddish scabs on his face and his hair is thin and yellow' (LE p.31). Prusse suggests that Farrell's protagonists are 'besieged' by dogs (192); they attach themselves to unwilling humans as disease does. Perhaps this notion could be extended to the thought that Farrell's dogs represent the sick human condition generally - the writer indicates this in The Singapore Grip in the very name of its dog, - symbolising the illness, the troubled self-awareness, the failures and frustrations, the impossible challenges and the fear of death in Man,

in other words, The Human Condition.

As Farrell moves into the trilogy, so his dogs are seen to pursue his human characters: Major Archer, in Troubles, is followed by Rover, who is dragged down by the weight of a chicken tied to his neck; Fleury, in The Siege of Krishnapur, attracts a sinister, stalking pariah dog; and Archer once again, in The Singapore Grip, is singled out by the animal which is 'rotting internally' (SG p.506). Even in The Hill Station, as Spurling (p.159) discovers whilst examining Farrell's notes, Mrs. Forester's son Jack is intended to die from rabid dog-bite. Farrell's dogs resemble a parasitic disease, even a plague. The first dog mentioned, in Farrell's earliest novel is described as inhabiting a world revolving with 'terrifying speed' but nevertheless standing squarely on four legs (AMFE p.16) ¹⁶ - in other words, 'always there'.

Just as dogs recur in Farrell's narratives, so do doctors. Ronald Binns has noted this, although he does not distinguish between them, judging them to be 'the wisest, most detached and clear-seeing characters' (p.23). Prusse divides these characters

into two groups: 'compassionate disciples of Hippocrates and useless ditherers'. Prusse's categorisation (p.205 f.) is the more exact. However, another approach might suggest a division into incompetent doctors, those who are wise and 'clear-seeing' and those who have something to say about the human condition. The first group would comprise Dr.Dunstaple of The Siege of Krishnapur and Dr.Brownley of The Singapore Grip. Both doctors, the first demonstrating the weak, blinkered and ill-judged way of doing things, the second showing some symptoms of going through a process of disintegration himself, clearly fit into Farrell's picture of imperial decline. These men show no connection either to the early fiction or to French literary influence.

Dr.Baker of The Lung does match Binn's description. Sane and quick to comprehend, Baker contributes to one of the last major encounters in the novel, balancing concepts of death (Monica's) and life (Sands') in his intelligent farewell to the protagonist (pp.203 ff.). There is a certain constraint and some careful drawing in this delineation of a doctor which is missing from the portraiture of the others. This leaves the impression that Baker may be largely a figure from Farrell's own

experience whilst in the same predicament as Sands. There is, too, a strong kinship with Rieux here, the doctor, narrator and central character in Camus' La Peste.

Rieux's intelligence and integrity dominate Camus' novel. He is familiar with all the facets of life at Oran, even with its short-comings (LP pp.5f.). He has a perceptive knowledge of individuals, some of them important in the community like M.Othon the Magistrate (p.12), and some who are central to events like Rambert the journalist (p.13), Tarrou the diarist (p.14) and Paneloux the Jesuit (p.18). Rieux has a certain world-weariness - he ' . . . was sick and tired of the world he lived in . . . ' (p.13). Yet as he reflects on the plague as an indestructible threat, he asserts that men must 'strive their utmost to be healers' (pp. 284 f.). Dr.Baker's overall control of Sands' disease, his melancholy comment, 'Life isn't only wonderful. It's all there is' (TL p.71), and his positive and practical final encouragement - 'Don't ask too much of yourself. It takes time learning to live again' (TL p.205) - indicate similar qualities to Rieux's, qualities which are taken forward and developed in the character of Dr. McNab in The Siege of Krishnapur.

McNab functions as a foil to Dunstaple's old and ignorant way of dealing with disease. He is studious and open-minded, giving serious consideration to the native method of stitching wounds with biting ants (SK p.94), and showing some understanding of the use of Chinese acupuncture as a valid approach to medical treatment (p.255). It is McNab who develops the empirical theory on treating the cholera which rages through the Residency (p.149); and it is he who deals successfully with the Collector's erysipelas, literally opening Hopkins' eyes (p.218). In his willingness to experiment, he could be said, also, to resemble Rieux's colleague in La Peste, Dr. Castel, labouring away 'with unshaken confidence, never sparing himself, at making anti-plague serum on the spot with the makeshift equipment at his disposal' (LP p.128). The Collector's appraisal of McNab sums him up: 'He was the best of us all. The only one who knew what he was doing' (SK p.312). Hopkins' comment is, by implication, an indictment of the Empire days of the past, with McNab's 'new' approach as the right one, this man standing alone amidst all the mistakes and failures of himself as Collector, of his Victorian colonial colleagues and of the Indian empire.

In transferring McNab to the second Indian novel, The Hill Station, Farrell betrays a continuing pre-occupation with the competent and sage doctor as drawn by Camus. He shifts McNab's concerns to something broader than the basic treatment of symptoms and, returning at the same time somewhat closer to Rieux's view of disease, has McNab pondering the notion that there might be 'in addition to the physical, a mental or moral aspect to all illness' (THS p.67). His instinct tells him that

. . . [A]ll things were one, that everything was connected, that an illness was merely one of many fruits of an underground plant in the community as a whole (THS p.73).

The moral and mental aspect of illness is surely bound to the imagery of the plague at Oran as McNab reflects that 'He felt uneasy here, as if beside the beautiful scenery . . . there lurked the malevolent presence of a disease he would be unable to control' (THS p.113).¹⁷

To the third group of Farrell's doctors belong Dr.Cohen from A Girl in the Head and Dr.Ryan of Troubles. Clearly competent in their day, within the timescale of the narrative they are subject to the

decay of ageing and are approaching the final outcome. These men comment unsentimentally on the human condition. Unlike the other doctors, they generate a certain wry comedy in the narrative. They share an absurdist view of the predicament that is life and death.

'Strange,' said the doctor, coming back,
'to think that a beautiful woman who seemed like a solid thing, solid as granite, was really no more solid than a flaring match, a burst of flame, darkness before and darkness after . . . People are insubstantial, they never last . . .'

 (T p.307).

Of Cohen's death Farrell remarks: 'The old man had merely reached the end of a natural cycle of birth, growth, maturity and death' (AGITH p.170).

All the early novels of Farrell are death-haunted. The whole of the narrative of A Man From Elsewhere is predicated upon the approaching death of one man. The Lung exercises the concept of mental and spiritual death, incorporates the self-inflicted demise of one patient and awaits the approaching end of another. The third novel also recounts two deaths, and promotes a death-in-life view of existence through the consciousness of the central character.

Camus' La Peste is a novel about death by virtue of its primary theme. The narrative is punctuated by descriptions and reports of the deaths of characters already introduced to the reader. Chapter 2 opens with the plague symptoms and subsequent death of the porter, M. Michel (LP pp.21 ff.). Leading figures of the town, Rieux's friends and colleagues are infected and die - Fr. Paneloux (p.214), Dr. Richard (p.219), M. Othon (p.248), Tarrou (p.266) and finally Rieux's wife (p.269). There is also the attempted suicide, not related to the plague, of the deranged Cottard (p.19). The narrator describes makeshift burials (pp.161 ff.), and observes the rapid fading in the memory of the living of those who have died. The forgetting, Rieux suggests, is part of 'the habit of despair' (p.170). Touching on Camus' own existentialist philosophy the doctor expands:

Without memories, without hope they (the people of Oran) lived for the moment only. Indeed the Here and Now had come to mean everything to them . . . the plague had gradually killed off in all of us the faculty not of love only but even of friendship . . . love asks something of the future, and nothing was left to us but a series of present moments (p.170).

The threatening presence of death, as described

in La Peste, sits brooding over all Farrell's fictions. As Anna Cichón points out, when death menaces Farrell's protagonists, they begin to consider deeply life's ephemeral nature - the definition of life as a 'series of present moments.'¹⁸ Sands, having just escaped death, concludes that living is 'a way of passing the time till (death) happens.' ; he observes, ' . . . [W]e're all just waiting for a tragedy to happen . . . like the death of the people we love or our own death . . . ' (TL p.75). In the penultimate chapter, Sands reflects: 'His own death had not been avoided by the lung, merely postponed'(p.196). The concept of life as a postponement comes very close to the thoughts of Rieux in La Peste:

. . . [T]he plague . . . can lie dormant for years . . . and perhaps the day would come when, . . . it roused up its rats again and sent them forth to die in a happy city (LP pp.284 f.).

Like The Lung, Farrell's third novel also begins with a close encounter with death. Boris' thoughts turn to the universal problem of the passing of Time.

For a few days afterwards he had stalked about the house doing things 'for the last time' and taking a melancholy view of his affairs . . . It left behind it . . . a certain notion of the transience of life (AGITH p.8).

The passing of time is twice alluded to in the episode recounting the death of Dr.Cohen (pp.169 f.); and the subtle reduction of living-time, or postponement is contemplated by Boris in a series of 'dying' images as he ponders the death, at the circus, of the Urbino sister.

Did she realise, the girl . . . that her days had dwindled down? And all through August and the first days of September she had watched the people leaving, the dying echoes of laughter, seen the leaves grow dusty, the bright petals lose their glow, too many people on the beach, and then too few . . . (AGITH p.192).

Prusse notes how the imagery of death transfers to Troubles, especially in Farrell's description of the Majestic hotel (p.109). The 'peeling white skeleton ' of the diving board, for example (p.147) and the 'white wooden beams' of the hotel's roof being exposed in the gale (T p.390). The image of the skeleton is used again in the Major's first impression of the Gothic surroundings of the Majestic;

its vanished gates leaving only the 'skeletons' of hinges, the smashed windows and ivy-bearded walls of the lodge and the 'thick congregation of trees' inviting him in, as it were, to a perpetual funeral (T p.18). The novel even introduces its theme with the discovery of 'white skeletons scattered round about' in the burned ruins of the hotel (p.10).

There is a comparison in the use of the imagery of death with Camus' L'Étranger, the novel which is structured around the death of the mother in its opening pages, the murder of the Arab as its central climax and the imminent execution of Meursault as its finale. Camus emphasises the blackness of Meursault's perception of his mother's funeral - 'the sticky black tar' of the road, the 'dull black clothes and the shiny black hearse' (LE p.21); he refers to the lines of dark cypresses leading away into the countryside, and the discomfort of Meursault's dark garments (LE p.20). There are traces of the Gothic in Camus' writing, too; in the pallor of the funeral director's face and in the reference to 'the blood-red earth tumbling onto mother's coffin, the white flesh of the roots mixed in with it . . . ' (LE p.22). The 'ghastly rictus' of the old manservant turning slowly to look at the Major in Troubles (p.111), and

the root thrusting through the parquet flooring of the Majestic 'like a thick, white, hairy arm (p.389), offer a close resemblance to Camus' imagery. In looking at death as it is discussed in Farrell's early fiction, it is necessary to consider what Camus in his philosophical essay Le Mythe de Sisyphe terms 'dying voluntarily' (LMS p.13); for suicide, real and attempted, feature in all three of Farrell's first novels. Camus, although he suggests that 'the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of daily agitation and the uselessness of suffering' offer the individual grounds for self-destruction (LMS p.13), ultimately condemns the action as allowing both life and death to have dominion over one. He ends his essay on the same brave and rebellious note as his closely-allied novel L'Étranger: 'The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy' (LMS p.11). There is no consideration of suicide in L'Étranger. There is, however, in the first pages of La Peste.

Cottard, a lonely and isolated man - 'His bedroom, meals at a cheap restaurant, some rather mysterious comings and goings - these were the sum

of Cottard's days' (LP p.53) - has all Camus' reasons for committing suicide. His neighbours describe him as a 'man with a secret grief' (p.33). The author denies the attempt its success, though; Cottard is found and cut down from his rope. It is implied that perhaps Cottard denied himself; the fall had not been sufficient to break the collar-bone. Cottard is saved from death but is not saved from the consequences of his isolation. He exits from the narrative raving, in the arms of the police (p.281). Camus seems to concede that there are some who can no longer push the rock up the hill. Farrell is interested in such individuals.

Farrell's first novel, A Man From Elsewhere, also deals with a thwarted suicide in the attempt of another, female outsider, Gretchen, the supposed daughter of Regan. In her, Farrell is also discussing loneliness and isolation. Gretchen, initially, rejoices in being outside; 'I'm alone and it's great . . . ' (p.37). Her sense of being rejected by Regan, though, prompts thoughts of death: '. . . [S]he wondered hysterically if death meant anything at all. Nobody else seemed to pay any attention to it ' (p.125); Here is the ultimate existentialist dilemma. As with Cottard, her life is saved by prompt intervention.

Farrell, like Camus, dismisses suicide as an answer in this case. Not so in his next novel, The Lung.

For Wilson, loneliness and despair, the isolation of a diseased mind, and the perceived threats from well-meaning nurses, doctors and police, whose actions and existence he does not understand, leave him no choices. Farrell is in accord with Camus' La Peste here; he is able to concede the argument for suicide to those whose mental illness is such that they have lost what understanding they had of the world. There is an interesting comparison with Camus, too, in the coda to Wilson's death. The men on the ward decline the possibility of attending their friend's funeral; '. . . [T]he whole thing would naturally have become a dizzy farce, nothing to do with Wilson' (TL p.189). Meursault, if he had been given the option would have voiced something similar.

A Girl in the Head is the last novel in which Farrell alludes to suicide; and his references are figurative, at best ambiguous. Boris, trapped in the branches of his own symbol, the sycamore tree, sees himself launching out into space (p.11); he frequently engages in Hamlet-like soliloquies, questioning the purpose of carrying on - 'What am

I doing here? . . . The truth is simply that my past life had become too heavy to carry any further' (p.35); and in the final episode he seems to have killed his sycamore, relating a story about an alcoholic 'friend' for whom nothing could work: '. . . [I]n the end I found myself saying: "All right, then - die, you bastard - and see if I care." ' (p.221). As in A Man From Elsewhere, though, death by suicide is not Farrell's answer to the problem of existence any more than it is Camus'. He is forced to agree that individuals, especially outsiders, must go on rolling boulders up mountains. And all the protagonists in the following trilogy do this. From Boris onwards, though, the mood of the outsider is not one of happy rebellion, but one of comic irony.

Although Farrell's conclusions about how the fundamental challenge of life must be answered differ from Camus', his preoccupation with disease and death, throughout the seven novels including The Hill Station, shows the influence of existentialist thought specifically as it is exercised in La Peste, L'Étranger and Le Mythe de Sisyphe. His use of these two phenomena in the early fiction as metaphors for

the whole human condition owes most to La Peste; symbolism and central images derive from this work and from L'Étranger. In his later, most accomplished writing, Farrell saw the opportunity to turn these ideas into an allegorical criticism of imperialism and capitalist exploitation. His last, unfinished work gives some indication that, at his death, he was still creatively re-working Camus' thinking.

The universal problem of death and near-death, spiritual, mental and physical, by disease, decay, by accident and as brought about by the despairing self is explored by Farrell in his earliest fiction with references to, and comparisons with Camus' writing. The impact of Camus' presentation of murder remains now to be addressed.

CHAPTER 5

DEATH ON A BEACH

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Reading Farrell's early fiction in the context of Camus' influence, especially in the light of L'Étranger, it would seem very clear that the most dramatic episode in his first novel, A Man From Elsewhere, the attack by three youths on a beach upon Sayer, and the attempted rape of his companion, Gretchen, stems directly from the French writer's central and climactic account of Meursault's murder of an Arab on a similar beach in the suburbs of Algiers.

From 1960 to 1962, whilst teaching first in Mende in the Massif Central and then in Toulon, and at the same time preparing and beginning to write A Man From Elsewhere, Farrell was continually aware, reading the papers and conversing in bars, of the atrocities and the brutality of the Algerian war. He was in Toulon shortly after the declaration of the ceasefire, when de Gaulle visited the city, having finally disengaged from the colony. In a significant reference to Sisyphus, Farrell commented

on the general's dejected demeanour. Lavinia Greacen records his words: 'It was rather pathetic For those who like, as I do, big men trying to roll boulders up mountain slopes, the whole event was full of sadness (pp.144 f.). He was also in Toulon to witness the aftermath of the 'liberation' - the out-of-work army personnel and the exiled colonists seeking to replace their lost lives.

Algeria was very much on his mind.

Luc is the character in A Man From Elsewhere who articulates most persistently an existential awareness of the painful worthlessness and impotence of his own being; he uses the Algerian conflict as a vehicle by which to express this.

A radio broadcast reporting two explosions in Oran (Camus' plague town), causing seven deaths and much wounding, generates a stream of conflicting thoughts in Luc, thoughts which may have entered Farrell's own mind from time to time.

But it was not too late to give his life a meaning. In fact the meaning was already there. It lay in what happened day after day in Algeria
 . . . the explosions, the detention

camps, the torture to extract confessions . . . the day-to-day history of a country for which he was responsible. The only thing which lay between himself and the achievement of a reason for living was the vague shadowy barrier of inertia (p.49).

Connecting with the sentiments of Camus' Meursault, Luc has a gnawing need to feel that something matters. After his departure from St.Guilhem, he tries to train himself to 'think seriously':

Algeria. That was a serious thought. Algeria. He had a vague picture in his mind of bodies lying bleeding in the sand . . . ' (144).

Luc's intention to make himself feel 'real anger and real sympathy' is thwarted by the pettiness in himself which he is trying to escape. ' . . . [H]e could not' (p.144). Algeria and deaths in the sand have begun to be associated in Farrell's writing with personal failure.

Luc pursues his thinking and finds, in a somewhat contrived episode, the kind of issue for which he is searching - an Algerian Arab being refused service in a café. He is twice humiliated as, on an ill-judged impulse he gives the Arab a

thousand francs only to see him disappear into the darkness; and he returns to the café to remonstrate with the owner who explains the reason for ejecting the man. 'How was he to know that a man he had taken for a persecuted Algerian was nothing more than a drunken Arab who had been molesting a lady?' (p.165). In attempting to convert a philosophical conviction into concrete action, Luc has again met with failure.

. . . [T]he moment he touched the perfect situation it turned into something else, something perfectly banal and sordid. That was the trouble, everything he touched, no matter how beautiful in appearance, promptly turned to ashes in his fingers (pp. 165 f.).

Sands and Slattery are to repeat the sentiment later.

The concept of blame or guilt enters into this encounter with the Algerian, also. The word 'fault' recurs. 'Somewhere Algerians were really persecuted and tortured. It was not his fault if he could not find them. Or was it?' (p.166). As if to reinforce painful awareness of failure, guilt and sense of futility, Farrell moves his character swiftly into the seduction of a seventeen year-old girl from

which episode he derives nothing but a sense of numb detachment, - 'a great and terrifying silence' - and the question 'Was it wrong to deflower a virgin for no better reason than that he was forty and would soon lose the opportunity?'. The answer comes back: it was 'futile to ask' (p.169).

The portrayal of a secondary character at odds with himself, exercising notions about the French treatment of Algeria and its people, and consumed with negative feelings - and all these things uncomfortably mixed with relationships with women - has some bearing on Farrell's preoccupation with Camus' murder scene in L'Étranger.¹ In another café on a beach, Farrell has Sayer, in A Man From Elsewhere, defending Gretchen too aggressively from the attentions of three youths, and provoking an ambush upon himself and the attempted sexual attack upon her.

The parallels with Camus' episode are numerous. In each case a woman is at the centre of an argument, Saver assaults a youth (AMFE p.134), just as Raymond fights the brother of his Arab mistress (LE p.32); the café youths initially retreat (AMFE p.134), as

do Raymond's Arab and his friend (LE p.57); the café youths are waiting for Sayer on the beach (AMFE p.138), where the Arab is waiting for Raymond (LE p.58); the youths make the initial attack upon Sayer with a stone (AMFE p.138), and the Arab is the first to draw a knife to threaten Meursault (LE 60). But here Farrell departs from Camus' pattern. Whereas Meursault reacts quickly to save himself and kills the Arab with Raymond's gun, raising Camus' discussion about death, how much importance we should attach to it and how much guilt we should bear when faced with it, Sayer's behaviour, like Luc's, generates problems of inadequacy in the consciousness of the individual.

Farrell deliberately undercuts the possibility of Sayer measuring up to the control and ultimate heroism of Meursault by references to and comparisons with conventional heroic behaviour in other forms of literature. After the encounter in the café, Gretchen unconsciously alludes to fairy tale and myth by commenting to Sayer: 'You're not only a prince, you're a knight in armour' (AMFE p.134). During the attack on Sayer, echoes from a Homeric account of a killing in epic battle abound (p.139). 2

Luc's attempt at the noble gesture is similar in that it contains references to the tough cowboy in Western films (p.164). Meursault, on the other hand, transcends medieval knights, Greek warriors and saloon gun-slingers by virtue of his genuinely heroic humanity. Luc and Sayer fall far short. They cannot gauge and contain their situation. and their responses are inadequate. Sayer's ordeal is diminished in the narrative by not being recounted through his own consciousness as Meursault's is. His ultimate failure is observed and described by a woman, Gretchen, who is partly distracted in any case by another overriding concern. Most importantly, Sayer is not placed by Farrell in the path of death as Meursault is by Camus: 'Sayer had not been killed' (p.140); he is merely sponged down and tidied up by some German tourists. The real tragedy for Gretchen 'continued to pursue its ineluctable course' elsewhere. 'Regan continued to die' (p.141). Death on an Algerian beach for Meursault crescendoes into final exultant joy: 'I realized that I'd been happy, and that I was still happy' (LE p.117). Luc's encounter with an Algerian Arab leaves him with a 'chorus of muted laughter' directed at his retreating back (p.165); Sayer's ordeal is accompanied by a 'yell of laughter'

(p.139). They have failed the test and are derided; they have suffered a kind of living death. Luc's encounter with the Algerian marks the death of his search for a higher meaning in his life. He fades from the narrative, and is referred to later as newly-married to Mado, the mistress to whom he could not properly relate. Sayer's experience on the beach kills his romantic relationship with Gretchen and his political 'faith and conviction that he was right' (p.150) - the death of self-belief.

Farrell's second novel, The Lung, opens with life being re-affirmed in the wedding of a friend. But during the ceremony Sands, caught up early in the irony which is the mark of this novel, is already on his way to his iron lung/coffin and, partly delirious from the onset of polio, he sees himself travelling towards a beach where a man with a paralysed arm is selling 'glistening white flowers' to tourists. The shrunken arm prefigures Sands' and Farrell's fate. The white flowers are perhaps a remembered detail from the description of Meursault's journey to his own fate, when he crosses a plateau dropping down to the beach where the murder is to

take place. 'It was covered with yellowish rocks and brilliant white asphodels standing out against what was already a hard blue sky' (LE p.51).

Here references in The Lung to beaches which have a connection with Camus' writing cease. The themes of failure and guilt, though, are exercised in another, unexpected way and always, as in the image of the white flowers, in a sick delirium or alcohol-fuelled reverie. It is as though Farrell were connecting with his own sub-conscious references in order to examine his own failure and guilt, and to attach it to the fiction of Sands.

There are valid biographical reasons for considering this as a possibility. The relevant image recurring in The Lung is that of a drowned sheep lying half-buried on a beach. How this image links with the ways in which Farrell perceived his own besetting short-comings needs to be explained.

In the Winter of 1959-1960, after he had recovered from the worst effects of his polio attack and had travelled round Spain with two friends and his girlfriend, Judy Mitchell, Farrell arranged a break from

his Oxford studies in a cottage on the Wexford coast with his American fellow-student, Roger Donald, Donald's girlfriend and Judy Mitchell. The talk at Oxford had been of Farrell's intention to marry Judy. Donald recalls serious quarrels between Farrell and Mitchell during that period; and Judy returned to Dublin early, to Trinity College where she was studying, whilst Farrell withdrew his offer to take her to her cousin's twenty-first birthday celebrations in County Wicklow.

Before Donald returned to Oxford on his own, he and Farrell took a last walk along the beach near the cottage and came upon the body of a drowned sheep half-buried in the sand. Death, so recently a part of Farrell's fears, had taken on as Lavinia Greacen expresses it, 'a single, lasting image.'³ Meanwhile, Judy had been involved in a car crash and was in danger of her life.

Through coma, brain-surgery and very slow recovery, Farrell kept up a vigil by Mitchell's bedside, and told a friend that 'he intended to stay by Judy for the rest of his life'; he promised

never to leave her (Greacen p.123). This sounds remarkably like the remembered promise in the pub: 'I'll never let you down . . . ' 4

Farrell did let Mitchell down, eventually returning to Oxford and communicating with her less and less frequently. Finally, he invited her to his lodgings when she had recovered, where she found a room full of his Oxford friends who ignored her, and what appeared to her to be a calculated scenario in which Farrell made it clear that she no longer fitted into his life. Farrell was afterwards consumed with guilt, confessed it to his friends, and wrote in his notebook: 'Remember that all our failures are ultimately failures in love' (Greacen p.132) - a personal revelation which reverberates throughout A Girl in the Head and on to Troubles.

From the writing of The Lung onwards, images of dead sheep and episodes set on beaches are associated with the protagonist's failure to come up to expectation, feelings of guilt and blame, and futile attempts to form satisfactory relationships with women. They are also, as in the beach episode

in L'Étranger, associated with times of assay, or testing.

The first oblique and somewhat perplexing reference to a drowned sheep in The Lung surfaces in Sands' drunken ramblings to Marigold as he gives her an account, in a dislocated fashion, of a casual sex-encounter with an American girl on a boat:

"Making love in a bunk isn't very satisfactory, by the way, although it was once, with a drowned sheep . . . And one night I woke up to find her crying and telling me that I didn't love her and that I was still in love with my wife." You were looking so unhappy that I thought you were going to jump over (p.96).

How the final direct statement fits into Sands'/Farrell's recollections is not quite clear; but the scenario is very similar to that in another drunken memory at the beginning of the novel, where Sands is in a train travelling from Madrid to Cadiz, 'sleeping now in a luggage rack with a Danish girl . . . (p.18). This, in turn, presumably connects with Farrell's holiday in Spain in 1959, where he had arranged to meet Judy Mitchell and, on returning to Oxford, spoke repeatedly of marrying her (Greacen p.120). This is, arguably,

where the 'drowned sheep' image links with memories of travelling in Spain. It is also worth drawing attention to Sands's reference to his own suicide, following quickly as it does upon his strange confession of sex in a bunk: 'Remind me that the first thing I do when I get out of this bleeding machine is to commit suicide' (p.96).

Deep sub-conscious links with Judy Mitchell, beaches and the discovery of dead sheep become clearer later in The Lung when Sands intimates to Marigold that having only been married to Sally (her mother) for three months, he had a month-long affair with an Italian girl in County Wicklow.

How could I have forgotten? There was a dead sheep on the beach . . . those four shoes imprinting themselves side by side . . . We can also add the drowned sheep that we came upon half-buried in the sand, glass-eyed, fleece matted with sand and salt water, legs spread as if it had died in the act of beautifully moving . . . You took a dead stick polished like ivory and wrote beneath it in the sand: Quis (sic) tollis peccata mundi. Then we left the sheep to its own devices and went home gathering driftwood for the fire . . . We lived in a wooden beach cottage and slept in bunks . . . (pp.138 f.).

The Latin reference to the Mass, with its incorrect grammar, ⁵ brings together concepts of sin and

betrayal in the context of relationships with women. The reference returns, naggingly, towards the end of the novel when Sands articulates a Joycean stream of thoughts and dream-like memories as, merely satisfying his lust, he contrives to make love to Marigold not on a beach, but on the edge of the hospital exercise pool.

The sheep stared back at him . . . through her flowing hair. The sand stung four foot-prints to a bitter extinction and the wind burst blood vessels. Life is a dream . . . His eyes were glassy, his hair was seaweed when they dragged him out. Quis tollis . . . Life was. I did my best. At least, I did my best to do my best . . . I love you, Sands may have said, whatever he meant (p.174).

The sheep is not just half-buried in the sand; it is half-concealed in Sands - or perhaps, Farrell.

There is a disturbing unconscious description in this passage, one of so many in Farrell's novels, of his own death; but also a deliberate contact with his experiences by way of the deepest workings of his sub-conscious. This type of writing is very close to the therapeutic relating of recurring dreams emanating from a disturbed psyche. Both

extracts (pp.138 f., p.174), are very close in the narrative to references to the 'scarlet fox', the image from Richard Hughes' novel The Fox in the Attic. This influential work has been mentioned briefly here before, in contexts where Farrell is expressing the protagonist's longing to escape and be free.⁶ It could be argued that the beaches so often alluded to in The Lung, refer directly to Judy Mitchell but, at the same time, are partly a sub-conscious quotation from Camus whose work, as Lavinia Breacen relates (p.140), was re-read by Farrell in 1960, a key date in the Farrell/Mitchell affair. One can only try to imagine the impact which the beach scene in L'Étranger made upon Farrell's creative consciousness at this time. It is surely feasible to suppose that if, in re-working these painful memories from the recent past, Farrell was amalgamating personal experience with strong literary images from Hughes whose work he had read in his schooldays, he was also incorporating images like the white flowers and critical events on a beach from the work of Camus. When Farrell's next novel, A Girl in the Head, is considered, the close linking of these synthesised literary and actual experiences will become clearer.

The third novel explores 'failures in love' but in a different way from The Lung. The failure in Boris' case is an inability to attract and deserve love, not the betrayal of another person who is offering love. There are three critical episodes incorporating beach settings, but the 'drowned sheep' image does not appear in or near any of them, or indeed in any part of the narrative. Two metaphorical attacks and a killing take place on the sand at Maidenhair Bay. The victims are Boris' love and hope.

It is significant that, although the influence of Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita is heavy in this novel,⁷ Farrell moves away from the cheap motels and suburban gardens, the seduction sites of Nabokov's novel, and returns to the small seaside areas of provincial towns which are a feature of his earlier novels and of Camus' L'Étranger. An anonymous stretch of sea and sand becomes a testing-ground, as in the French novel, for Boris' repeated assays not in courage, but in love.

The first test on the beach in Maidenhair Bay

(AMFE pp.129-142) compares in its detail with the prelude to the first attack by the two Arabs in L'Étranger (LE pp.51-54). Boris, Alessandro and Inez clamber across a rocky shelf to the sand, and Meursault and Marie cross a plateau of rocks before reaching the beach (AGITH p.130, LE p.52). There are references to 'brilliant sunshine' and 'blinding sun' in Farrell's description just as there are allusions to the heat and the glare in L'Étranger (AGITH p.130, LE pp.52,54). Boris, Alessandro and Inez bathe in the sea; Meursault, Masson and Marie decide to take a swim (AGITH pp.130 f., LE pp.52 f.). Boris' wife, Flower, brings a basket of food to spread out on the sand; Masson's wife provides a meal on the beach (AGITH p.133, LE p.53). There is an apparent threat in the possibility of Inez drowning, just as there is an unresolved threat of attack from the Arabs at the end of Camus' scene (AGITH p141, LE pp.54 f.).

At this stage in his work, Farrell is undercutting all themes and influences with powerful comic irony. Humbert Humbert's enslaving lust is reduced to Boris' feverish efforts to impress:

'With powerful, windmilling strokes Boris flailed his way into the sea . . . and then stood up, gasping for breath' (p.130). His 'painful devotion' is mirrored by the anxious eyes and constant attentions of the dog, Bonzo. Boris' version of Meursault's testing-ground becomes a comic stage for repeated demonstrations of inadequacy as Alessandro wrestles Boris into submission in a friendly contest (pp.138 ff.). and plunges into the sea, fully-clothed, to rescue a 'drowning' Inez, while Boris is left struggling on the rocks with the zip of his trousers (p.141). Alessandro introduces the white-maned and black-eyed Starlight to strike wonder into the romantic heart of Inez; Boris has Bonzo with his 'greyish-yellow' stomach and blue-ish eyes. Farrell's protagonist, joining in a refrain of futility and failure with that other outsider, Sands, confesses: 'I'd have committed suicide, of course, if I'd known' (p.132). He walks back to the house after

his failed assay with 'wavering legs' and with 'salt tears' squelching out of his best crocodile shoes, Farrell having subtly removed, by this allusion to fakery, any nuance of sympathy from the narrative (p.142).

Returning to the beach for Boris' second challenge (pp. 174-183), Farrell shifts from the glare and heat of Camus' sun to rain and storm - anti-weather for an anti-hero. The players in the contest are the same. Boris, Alessandro and Inez. There are now two glamorous horses, Starlight for Alessandro and a black for Inez contrasting, as she points out, with her costume. Boris the outsider is left on foot. The assay has the same knightly purpose - to rescue the lady, this time on a bolting horse. Boris fumbles with his situation as he fumbled with his trouser zip before, desperately preparing to pursue Inez, with the gallant Alessandro galloping on ahead, on a bicycle. The crash which ends his pursuit symbolises the death of his hope. Boris' alter ego,

the sycamore tree, wafts a large dead leaf to dance in front of him 'before settling over his mouth like a clammy hand'; and pools of water gather round his crocodile shoes (p.181). As if to underscore Boris' inadequacy, Inez is rescued by the grocery man, Alessandro by a scoutmaster. Every aspect of this episode signals Camus' climactic scene being turned on its head. It is a template being used on the obverse side: the predictability of the sequence of events, the exclusion of the protagonist, the parodying of an out-of-date genre, the negligible concerns at issue, the final blotting-out of the protagonist - '. . . [N]obody was paying any attention' (p.187) - and the ironical comedy demanding that notice be given to the fact that this was not a man being 'driven by a tenacious and therefore profound passion' (LE p.119). Boris, meanwhile, has barely survived his second test and his sycamore, 'pessimistic to the last, was invisibly drowning in quick-drying cement . . . ' (AGITH p. 208).

The third test (pp. 214-216), its number resonating with connotations of good and bad luck and biblical betrayal, is set up for Boris on the beach once again. The long preceding descriptive passage is dense with images of night-time beauty - a reddish moon, a vast field of stars, shadows and the glimmer of the beach resonating with the poetry of Matthew Arnold (p.214). Dressed in his waiter's white tie and tails, as if arrayed for his ritual execution, Boris ponders the melancholy passing of things - of love, of the year. As he tracks the familiar-sounding two pairs of footprints to the rocks, he has already been reduced to the rôle of voyeur. His hope is dead. The final coup de grâce is as sudden and as quick as the bullet from Meursault's gun; he recognises the hideous feet of his brother-in-law, identifying him as Inez' lover. Boris' love is murdered; and he, in turn, murders the sycamore tree, leaving 'only a stump' (p.219).

His portering of Alessandro to the leaving train echoes ironically Sayer's farewell to Gretchen in Farrell's first novel, and the writer leaves him with the final word in the book: 'Nothing' (p.220).

Boris is effectively dead. Metaphorically, he has had to play the part of Camus' Arab, not the rôle of the hero. As Farrell moves on to the Empire trilogy and into Troubles, he creates Boris' true successor, failure, outsider and anti-hero, Major Brendan Archer, arguably the writer's greatest character, who steps out of metaphor into actuality and is fated to suffer a real attack on a beach.

In the first of the trilogy novels, 'dead sheep' images make an early re-appearance. They would seem to be entirely separated from their original location, the sea-shore. There are two references to dead sheep, both having a direct effect on the Major; the first

as a single rotting head discovered by him in a chamber pot in a bedside cupboard (pp.43 f.), the second as a clean skull lifted by Edward Spencer from a stew being prepared for the dogs (p.49). These images have generated some discussion in the work of commentators.

Fiona McPhail, in her article printed in 1991, 'Major and Majestic: J.G.Farrell's Troubles',⁸ argues that the rotting sheep's head with the eye looking at the Major is

a variation on the motif of the eye painted on the bottom of a chamber-pot, that takes on renewed meaning when the owner of the hotel is seen presiding over a stew of sheep's heads that are to be fed to the dogs; by virtue of the old pun on dog and god, the Major is left to be observed by the eye of a god whose dwelling place is the chamber-pot (p.248).

Michael Prusse does not make any reference to the feeding of the dogs, but reasons that the description of the head in the cupboard as dead and maggot-ridden is a deliberate allusion on Farrell's part

to a godless universe. Prusse continues:

Farrell stresses the negation of God, because he perceives the insurgent movements in the Empire's colonies in terms of the Hegelian dialectics of the master-servant conflict. In L'Homme Révolté, Camus explains how an insight into this basic opposition - 'tuer ou asservir' (181-182) - helps in any effort to understand the logical failure of all violent revolutions (p.188).

Prusse notes that Farrell had already taken up the 'image of the Agnus Dei' in The Lung, but he does not explore the context of the Latin quotation on page 138. Neither critic notices the link between the sheep and the beach in Farrell's earlier work though, to be just, Lavinia Greacen's research was not available until 1999.

McPhail and Prusse are surely correct in their assumption that the 'dead sheep' image has reference to an aspect of religion. Farrell himself points this up in Troubles by juxtaposing the discovery of the rotting head with Edward Spencer's long Grace before breakfast, in which he thanks the Almighty for everything he can think of, including the dogs of

Kilnalough. It is interesting to note that Spencer insists in his prayer, 'For there is an order. Without it our lives would be meaningless' (p.44). There is also a suggestion, following on from the breakfast scene, of the presence of wickedness, in Farrell's description of the preparation of the sheep-stew. Spencer leads the Major towards

a three-sided fire-place spouting black smoke and orange flames. Over the fire hung the round black belly of an iron cauldron, steaming and bubbling . . . Evans, the tutor, was standing beside the cauldron stirring it . . . Stirring the cauldron with the flames leaping about his ears made him look positively sinister (p.49).

Having noted this, however, what is missing from McPhail's and Prusse's consideration of the 'dead sheep' image is an awareness of a repeating pattern in Farrell's writing which has been suggested here before; that is, the recurring combination of key literary images from the work of other authors with remembered details from profound personal experiences. To take an example from the novel before Troubles, Boris' dog and the name he gives it, as has already been indicated here, derives largely from the pariah in Lowry's Under the Volcano

and also from an overheard promise which haunted his conscience, 'I'll never let you down, Bonzo'. A fresh example from the novel which followed Troubles, The Siege of Krishnapur, might be the creation of the character of Lucy Hughes, the 'fallen woman'. This is undoubtedly taken from Farrell's reading of the primary sources emerging from the 1857 Indian Mutiny, and specifically from the memoirs of the Reverend H.S.Polehampton, who describes

. . . a poor English woman in distress;
 . . . (She) had been seduced . . . and
 had lived afterwards with one or two
 officers . . . Mr.Chauncy found her at 9
 the Dak-bungalow.

Lavinia Greacen states (p.162) that Lucy Hughes was also and without doubt inspired by Farrell's long relationship with a call-girl from London's West End. Greacen suggests more than once that this woman was not only part of a sexual relationship which survived for many years, but that she was one of the few people Farrell allowed to see into his private being. ¹⁰
 The examples in Farrell's narrative for this interweaving of the literary and the autobiographical

abound. One of the problems with McPhail's and Prusse's interpretations of Farrell's important image is that they both attach to impersonal theories, antecedents or analogues, and neglect Farrell's developing rather than random system of imagery.

McPhail's suggestion about the rotting sheep's head carries no evidence from the text. The eye looking at the Major surely derives from Farrell's description of the 'glass-eyed' sheep lying in the sand in The Lung (p.138). The reference to the dogs being fed must connect with the closely-adjacent image of the spaniel, Rover, being punished by having his collar hung with a dead chicken. McPhail herself suggests, most plausibly, that Rover represents an imperialist British government being encumbered, for its sins, by the problems of Ireland (McPhail p.250). Farrell reminds us, too, that the Major is to be punished later in the novel, and that

he is to be buried on the beach upright, in a begging position, just as Rover has been buried in the grounds of the Majestic. Guilt and punishment are much more likely to be the symbolic religious references operating here than a powerless or non-existent God suggested by pictorial fashions in antique chamber pots. McPhail's earlier comment about Archer's 'feeling of guilt at being alive' (p.146) is much closer to the text and more accurate. The Major's sense of guilt is evidenced in the narrative as, released finally from Spencer's long Grace, he sits down to breakfast and allows his thoughts to travel back to his experiences in the Great War: 'Long ranks of tiny eyes were now staring at the Major as if accusing him of being both alive and about to eat breakfast' (p.46). Eyes, accusation, guilt.

Prusse's interpretation of a 'dead or maggot-ridden' Agnus Dei image as stressing the negation of

God (p.188) is the more unexpected of the two commentaries, since Prusse was already aware of the recurrence of the 'dead sheep' image in The Lung. The main difficulty with his view and its place in Farrell's perception of 'insurgent movements in the Empire's colonies' is that when the image appears in the narrative the political motif has not yet taken hold in the novel. At this stage, Farrell is tightly focussed upon the 'troubles' of the Major, not those of Ireland. The reference to Camus' L'Homme Révolté, though, is interesting, for in his Introduction to the essay, Camus himself states that one of its aims is to understand the 'guilt' of the age we live in (LHR p.11).

Guilt and inadequacy are surely what Farrell's sheep and dog images are about, working simultaneously on several levels and mainly attaching, as in the early fiction, to the protagonist. The Major has feelings of 'survivor-guilt' because, although shell-shocked, he has at least come out of the war alive.

At breakfast he contemplates the wall behind the table on which is a memorial to the war dead.

' . . . [T]here was no end to the dead men . . . ', and he complements this thought with a biblical quotation, 'Greater love hath no man than this . . . ' (p.46). He also sees himself and the hotel guests assembled round the table sitting 'in shadowy silence clinking our chains like souls in perdition' (p.42). The recurring religious references point inexorably to the way in which Farrell has been using the 'dead sheep' image. There is a connection, too, with the earliest use of the image in The Lung, as Archer, from the moment of his arrival at the Majestic, finding no welcoming sign of his fiancée, questions his own judgement in involving himself with Angela: ' . . . [L]ooking at her pale and frigid face he wondered whether the kiss might have taken place only in his imagination ' (p.48). As he is to discover later, women die on you, or run off with other men. Associations with death and decay also lie in the images of sheep's heads, these to be expanded later by Farrell into nearly every aspect of life at the Majestic Hotel. There are, too, the very beginnings of a suggestion of political/imperial rottenness and culpability in his use of the image in this the first Empire novel.

There is one other aspect of the religious symbolism of the Agnus Dei which is relevant to the Major's situation; that is the extent to which he is a victim bearing the 'sins' of others. The Lamb of God and the scapegoat are very close in Judaeo-Christianity, if not virtually the same thing. In this respect, seen as a victim/scapegoat, Brendan Archer's character would marry very well with Meursault's the man who, as Camus said, 'represents the only Christ that we deserve' (LE p.119). Archer does gradually come to bear the responsibilities and the 'sins' of the community at Kilnalough to a point where he has to be driven out and 'sacrificed' on the beach. And there his 'resurrection' is witnessed by a group of women. Yet, even in a passage so strongly coloured by Gospel associations the Major, beginning to lose consciousness and, we assume, his life, is thinking 'about Sarah . . . and about love' (p.436). And this, after all, is where the story of Brendan Archer begins and ends. His 'love' of Angela brings him to Kilnalough, and although he leaves it behind, the sentiment, whatever it is, stays with him. '. . . [M]any years later he would sometimes think of (Sarah). And once or twice he thought he glimpsed her in the street' (p.445).

The Major is as much a failure in love, and a victim of love as Boris; and this, it could be argued, is why Farrell returns to the 'dead sheep' image. It also suggests that the sheep and the beach, although ostensibly quite separate in this novel, are in fact still interconnected in the imaginative sub-conscious of the writer.

With the attempted murder of the Major on the beach, Farrell has completed this highly complex, shifting and occasionally surreal web of psychologically-loaded impressions and memories; he is never to refer to it again. For the final exorcism he comes almost full circle back to his first novel and to one of that novel's main inspirations, Camus' L'Étranger; an attempted revenge murder on a perceived hostile, though innocent colonizer by the colonized; the fortuitous involvement of an un-interested individual in another man's troubles; an ordeal performed in a No-Man's-Land on the margins of the land and the sea.

The Sinn Feiners, like the Arabs in Camus' novel, have set out to pay back the man who has punished one of their own - Edward Spencer, who shot dead the

young IRA supporter (T p.416). The man the Algerians are looking for is Raymond Sintès, who beat his Arab mistress 'until she bled' (LE p.34) and who fought with her brother (p.42). 'Unsavoury characters' are noticed 'lurking among the trees' at Kilnalongh (T p.426); a group of Arabs follow Sintès 'all day' (LE p.43). The avengers are not looking for Archer, neither are they pursuing Meursault; Farrell's and Camus' protagonists are made victims by a twist of fate. Both have earlier urged caution in dealing with the threat (T p.416, LE p.57); both happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time; the real targets are safely somewhere else. Both walk towards their attackers unsuspecting and alone (T p.433, LE p.58). Both are buried; the Major physically, like the drowned sheep, Meursault metaphorically, in his cell drowning in a religious, judicial and moral flood. Both survive, but are changed.

Fiona McPhail suggests that the attempted assassination in the last pages of Troubles is a kind of 'baptism into life' (p.246). She continues: 'His feeling of guilt at being alive is changed into a dogged determination to keep the show on the road.' Certainly, Meursault's ordeal is a baptism into a

kind of life. 'Dogged determination' as attached to the Major does not quite ring true. An existentialist resignation to absurdity is probably closer to what is described on the final page of Farrell's novel (p.446). The close parallel with Winnie in Samuel Beckett's Happy Days, absurdly buried in sand, and wearing away her life as life wears her away, cannot be overlooked. Although whether Farrell, whose fascinated engagement with another Beckett drama, Endgame in 1966 was such that he almost knew it by heart (Greacen p.212), consciously intended the comparison or not, cannot be known at present. The real change in the Major is similar to that of Sayer in A Man From Elsewhere. He has to go on living life with the knowledge that there was something he nearly had, but failed to secure. It is another kind of death.

Farrell's preoccupation, then, with actual, figurative death or near-death on a beach works its way through all the early novels and undergoes its final exercise in the first of the Empire trilogy. His first novel features an attack which bears a strong resemblance to a parallel scene in L'Étranger. Other aspects of this narrative show sympathy with the Algerian

writer's work and his philosophy; but the lasting image, taken forward in Farrell's subsequent writing, is the beach, seen as a proving-ground, a place where the protagonist is tested. Moving on to the strongly-autobiographical The Lung, Farrell links Camus' beach to a beach of his own in Ireland where he, an aspiring writer, absorbed the image which was to be indelibly printed on his consciousness (and conscience) as a personal test of the strength of his love and loyalty. He failed that test. The searing image of a drowned sheep became fused in his mind with the Agnus Dei symbol, and added sin and guilt to a sense of inadequacy. A heavy overlay of protective irony is used conspicuously in this narrative. Boris, in the third novel, the victim of deluded love and subjected to a parody of the beach test, fails like his predecessors, and becomes a proto-type for all Farrellian Empire protagonists. The ordeal of Brendan Archer in Troubles is the closest of all to the Camusian model, partly in its detail, and partly because the irony falls away at this point and the Major's test becomes as serious and as real as Meursault's. Where Camus creates out of Meursault's essay a victory, an affirmation of rebellion in death

Farrell, though remaining broadly within the parameters of existentialist and Absurdist thinking, describes through his irony something rather closer to life as the majority, not the heroes, experience it - bewilderment, uncertainty, resignation to recurring failure and, in the end, the possibility of hope.

CONCLUSION

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Why make a study of three early pieces of fiction which were difficult to publish and not widely read in their own time, which are almost unavailable now and are barely mentioned in modern criticism, and which were dismissed by the author himself as merely 'casting around'? Most critics have tended to focus on the prize-winning and later novels; for, after all, they have a coherent theme, fall attractively into the popular genre 'historical fiction' and can clearly be seen as the mature work of an accomplished writer. Perhaps the answer is simply that it is time to attempt to bring the early and the later work properly together, to show some of the ways in which the Empire fiction grew out of the 'casting around' process, and to identify in the first novels the seeds of the themes, the characterisation and the techniques which furnish Farrell's more successful fiction and which give to his writing its distinctive voice.

Why Camus? There is by now ample evidence that

Farrell's reading had an unusual effect on his work, and that early on he had been inspired by French writers. The circumstances of his life, his facility for languages and his left-wing thinking made him comfortable with the France of the 60s; and questions and doubts about his own life drew from him a sympathetic consideration of Existentialism and its literature. It was to Camus, philosopher and novelist, that he was almost inevitably drawn. La Peste, Le Mythe de Sisyphe and L'Homme Révolté clarified and mirrored many of his own thoughts about the dilemmas created by the human condition. L'Étranger did this also but, in addition, resonated strongly in its central image with a personal crisis which threw up an internal debate about his identity not just as Man, but as an individual - a man. An image which was hauntingly stamped upon his consciousness by a single experience, connected, as by a magnetic force, with the climactic episode in Camus' novel, and helped to create in the early fiction the forerunners of the protagonist who inscribes Farrell's signature on his most acclaimed work - the Outsider.

There are well-defined existentialist links between Farrell's first novels and the Empire narratives; and

the latter would include the unfinished The Hill Station. The gradual emergence and eventual dominance of a struggling, inward-looking male protagonist, at odds with himself and the world he lives in, is one of these links. The principal Outsider in Farrell's early novels is flanked by secondary outsiders, female as well as male. These men and women, like him, express a preference for isolation; they, too, are in conflict with their external circumstances and manifest the symptoms of torturing internal turbulence; their beliefs disintegrate under the pressures of living; and they reject and are rejected by the opposite sex, resigning themselves to the conclusion that men and women are 'manacled together' only by desire.

Recurring existentialist themes are easily discernible in Farrell's early fiction, including the hostile nature of life itself, the disease and decay of mental and physical existence, the tedious and relentless effects of the passage of time, and the inevitability of death. Death, in Farrell's writing, is seen in its many aspects - physical death, including the contemplation of suicide, the death of integrity and of the essence of the individual,

the extinguishing of such ideals as heroism and the aspiration to romantic love, and the destruction of the balance and the certainty of the individual. Death is also seen as a release from a life in which it is impossible to find a meaning, far less to roll the Sisyphean boulder to the top of it; the weight of trying merely to carry on, for many, seems to be insupportable.

These themes and this existentialist characterization together with the writer's own experience of physical confinement and his developing sense of predicament or entrapment are brought together in a single supreme metaphor, generated in the early novels and forming the symbolic binding of the Empire trilogy - that is, the metaphor of the siege-universal. This is the second link between the early and the later work. The conditions of siege apply at one and the same time to the writer's preoccupation with the individual as a living consciousness as seen in the three early narratives, and to the historical vehicle, heavily researched and documented, which expresses that concept in the last four novels. The creation of the siege as a metaphor for human existence, though, is not entirely Farrell's own.

Many writers have been influential in Farrell's initial thinking as a writer; and their imprint on his fiction can be seen continuing and developing right up to the end of his life. From Joseph Conrad, Richard Hughes and Malcolm Lowry, Farrell takes inspiration for the creation of the lonely male protagonist, isolated and perplexed by life. From Hughes and Lowry he borrows the important imagery of, respectively, the fox, a symbol of the desperation for freedom in The Lung, and the dog, the four-legged, 'always-there' image of the human condition which enters his writing in the first paragraphs of A Man From Elsewhere and survives to the final pages of The Singapore Grip. Thomas Mann, eerily chiming with Farrell's own experience, prompts the theme of sickness and decay. And Vladimir Nabokov confirms in Farrell's creative imagination the importance of an examination of male/female relationships and the illusion of romantic love. From Jean-Paul Sartre's Existentialism and Samuel Beckett's Absurdist drama Farrell derives support for his own views on the pain and the never-ending tribulation and futility that is life, and a predilection for the symbolic circular structure within which his narratives are conceived. Having said this, however, it is the work of Albert Camus

which acts as a well-spring for most of Farrell's thematic concerns and for the central and secondary figures in his pattern of characterisation. Arguably, it is Camus, resonating with Farrell's own indelible memory of the iron lung - fortress and donjeon - who provides the over-arching metaphor describing the plight of the struggling men and women throughout the whole of the Irish writer's fiction, and who offers, also, a framework for the story of the British Empire in its last 'beleaguered' days - the siege.

Camus' La Peste, declared Farrell, was intended as the model and inspiration for The Siege of Krishnapur; and the comparisons are clear and abundant - a small community shut off from outside contact, enduring the onslaught of an 'enemy' with courage, stamina and ingenuity, suffering sickness and death, and becoming aware of the truth about its own condition and identity; despairing, then emerging triumphant, yet finally facing critical questions and doubts about the present and the future. L'Étranger describes some of these things, too. Together, the two French novels provide remarkable parallels - in addition to the central figure and the prevailing metaphor - with aspects of the whole of Farrell's work, beginning

with his early fiction and developing in the trilogy.

Existential 'ennui and despair' brood over the first three narratives and are quickly protected and distanced by Farrell's irony and black humour; these pervade the main body of his work and lend a unique tone to his writing. Key and recurring characters in Farrell's fiction, such as doctors and clergy, owe a debt in part to Camus' novels, as does the symbolical dog or pariah. Hostile settings dominate the narratives, for example, hospital wards, claustrophobic towns, crumbling hotels, colonial buildings and small defeated islands; these owe much to Camus in their descriptions of glaring light and oppressive heat, and often trace directly back to detail repeatedly used by the French author. Such features are born early in Farrell's writing and go on to find an important place in his description of the decline of an empire.

And finally, the stage for the testing of the Outsider, the no-man's-land almost Beckettian in its isolation and un-belonging, lying between the land and the sea, challenging Farrell's bewildered representatives of the human condition to show how much they can endure, fail in and survive; marking

the climax of the novels, and touching the nerve-
strands of Farrell's life and, one suspects, the
life of Camus - the beach. This, surely, is
where the two writers meet and share personally,
philosophically and artistically a common statement
about Meursault, Sayer, Sands, Slattery and the
Major, about the life of men and of Man.

Farrell's biographer, Lavinia Greacen, while
searching through his letters, came across one
written to Carol Drisko in the summer of 1968 -
the year of 'transition' between the early novels
and the trilogy. It contains a sentiment which sums
up the concerns of the whole of his work from
A Man From Elsewhere to The Hill Station. Its
fundamental importance to the novels merits its
place at the beginning of Greacen's record of his
life. Farrell writes:

I don't mean to sound ironic, the
characters have my sympathy. The
human condition - we all have
my sympathy.

Camus would have applauded.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

Notes to pages 3-4.

1. Benny Green, 'J.G.Farrell', Spectator, 25 August, 1979, p.20.
 2. John Spurling, 'As Does the Bishop', and Margaret Drabble, 'Things Fall Apart', appended to J.G.Farrell, The Hill Station, an Unfinished Novel (London: Phoenix, 2001). Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.
 3. Lars Hartveit, 'Affinity or Influence? Sir Walter Scott and J.G.Farrell as Historical Novelists', in Scott and His Influence, ed. by J.H.Alexander & David Hewitt (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1983), pp.414-20.
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- 'Ideological Stock-taking in J.G. Farrell's Historical Fiction', in Essays in Honour of Christian Smidt, ed. by Peter Bilton et al. (Oslo: University of Oslo Institute for English Studies, 1986), pp.251-62.

Notes to page 4.

3. (contd.)

Lars Hartveit, 'The Concept of Character in J.G. Farrell's Historical Fiction', in Proceedings from the Third Nordic Conference for English Studies, Vol.2 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1987), pp.673-81.

'The "jolting passage over the switched points of history" and the Experience of Dislocation in J.G.Farrell's The Singapore Grip', English Studies, 70.6 (1989), pp.566-80.

'The Art of Emplotment: the Mechanism of Amalgamating Fact and Fiction in J.G.Farrell's The Singapore Grip', in Studies in Modern Fiction: Presented to Bent Nordhjem on his 70th Birthday, ed. by Eric Jacobsen et al. (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 1990), pp.79-100.

'The Carnivalistic Impulse in J.G. Farrell's Troubles', English Studies 73.5 (1992), pp.444-57.

Notes to pages 4-5.

3. (contd.)

Lars Hartveit, 'The Imprint of Recorded Events in the Narrative Form of J.G.Farrell's The Siege of Krishnapur', English Studies 74.5 (1993), pp.451-69.

4. Margaret Scanlan, 'Rumors of War: Elizabeth Bowen's The Last September and J.G.Farrell's Troubles', Eire-Ireland 20.2 (1985), pp.70-89.

5. Ronald Binns, J.G.Farrell (London: Methuen, 1986).

6. Cf. Neil McEwan, Perspective in British Historical Fiction Today (London: Macmillan, 1987), p.6, and Elizabeth Bowen 'Ireland Agonistes', Europa 1 (1971), pp.38 f. Further parenthetical references will be made to these editions.

7. Anna Cichón, 'Politics, Ideology and Reality in J.G.Farrell's Early Novels', Anglica Wratislaviensia XXV (1993), pp.23-38.

'The Realm of Personality and History. A Study of J.G.Farrell's Fiction', Anglica Wratislaviensia XXVIII (1995), pp.18-89. Further parenthetical references will be made to these articles.

Notes to pages 5-7.

8. Ronald Binns. op.cit.; also Bernard Bergonzi 'Fictions of History', in The Contemporary Novel, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury & David Palmer (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 43-65; and T. Winnifrith, 'J.G. Farrell', in Jay Halio, ed. Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 14, Pt. 1 (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1983), pp. 288-91.
9. Ralph Crane & Jennifer Livett, Troubled Pleasures: the Fiction of J.G. Farrell (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997); and Michael Prusse, 'Tomorrow Is Another Day'. The Fictions of James Gordon Farrell (Tubingen & Basle: Francke Verlag, 1997). Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.
10. Lavinia Greacen, J.G. Farrell. The Making of a Writer (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), pp. 31, 94, 113, 136, 140, 191, 271, 331 and 334. Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.

Notes to pages 7-11.

11. Ralph Crane, ed. The Critical Grip (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999). Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.
12. Chris Ackerley, 'A Fox in the Doungeon: the Presence of Malcolm Lowry in the Early Fiction of J.G.Farrell', in The Critical Grip, op.cit., pp.19-35. Further parenthetical references will be made to this article.
13. Lavinia Greacen, op.cit., p.113.
14. Lavinia Greacen, op.cit., pp. 113,154,190,212, 229-33,326 and 333.
15. Ronald Binns, op. cit., pp.22-33 and 53.
16. Simon Caterson, 'Literary Influence and the Superfluous Man: J.G.Farrell, Richard Hughes and Joseph Conrad', in The Critical Grip, op.cit.,pp.36-47.
17. 'J.G.Farrell', in Bookmarks, ed. by Frederic Raphael (London: Jonathan Cape,1975), p.51.
See also Trinity College Library, Dublin, MSS 9128-60, Notebook 29 (9154).

Notes to pages 11-20.

18. Lavinia Greacen, op.cit., p.113.
19. Ronald Binns, op.cit., p.21, quoting from 'J.G. Farrell' in Bookmarks, op.cit.
20. Lavinia Greacen, op.cit., pp. 136, 138, 140, 174 and 191.
21. Frank Kermode, The Sense of an Ending (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.142 f.
22. Cf. J.G.Farrell, A Girl in the Head (London: Fontana, 1981), p.91, and Harold Pinter, The Birthday Party (London: Methuen, 1981), p.17.
23. Crane & Livett, op.cit., p.28.
24. William Golding, The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), p.89. I am indebted to Crane and Livett, op.cit., p.46 for their reference to this essay.
25. Farrell speaks of Scott in his 'Indian Diary' in The Hill Station, op.cit., p.217. D.C.R.A.Goonetilleke links Farrell with Paul Scott, E.M.Forster and Mary Renault in his 'J.G.Farrell's

Notes to pages 20-24.

25. (contd.)

Indian Works: His Majesty's Subjects?'
in Modern Asian Studies, Vol.37,
May, 2003, pp. 407 and 409 f.

26. J.G.Farrell, 'Indian Identities', Times Literary Supplement, 23 May, 1975, p.555. I am indebted to Crane & Livett, op.cit. for this reference. See p.34.

27. E.M.Forster, A Passage to India (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), pp.10 f.

28. Crane & Livett's reference is to Linda Hutcheon's book A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.113 f.

29. John McLeod, 'J.G.Farrell and Post-Imperial Fiction', in The Critical Grip, op.cit., pp. 178-195.

30. J.G.Farrell, 'All About India', (rev. of novels by R.K.Narayan), Guardian, 30 November, 1978, p.16.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

Notes to pages 29-32.

1. Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus [Le Mythe de Sisyphe, 1942] trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 2000), and The Outsider [L'Étranger, 1942] trans. by Joseph Laredo (London: Penguin, 2000). Further parenthetical references will be made to these editions.
2. Oliver Todd, Albert Camus: a Life trans. by Benjamin Ivry (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1971), pp.131,133.
3. Albert Camus, The Plague [La Peste, 1947] trans. by Stuart Gilbert (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948). Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.
4. Oliver Todd, op.cit., p.162.
5. Albert Camus, The Rebel [L'Homme Révolté, 1951] trans. by Anthony Bower (London: Penguin, 1971). Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.
6. Albert Camus, The Fall [La Chute, 1956] trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 2000). Further parenthetical references will be made to this edition.

Notes to pages 34-37.

7. James Farrell, A Man From Elsewhere (London: Hutchinson, 1963); James Farrell, The Lung (London: Hutchinson, 1965); and J.G. Farrell, A Girl in the Head (London: Fontana, 1981). Further parenthetical references will be made to these editions.
8. The character is generally taken to have been inspired by the film-maker Jean-Luc Godard, whose work Farrell admired. See Ralph Crane & Jennifer Livett, *op.cit.*, p.39.
9. Cf. Camus' La Chute [The Fall], *op.cit.*, p.98, where Clamence says: '. . . [A]nd for anyone who is alone, without God and without a master, the weight of days is dreadful.'
10. Gretchen also echoes La Chute when she says: 'How does one ever know if one's in love with someone?' (p.189). Clamence states: 'Of course, true love is exceptional, two or three times a century, more or less. The rest of the time there is vanity or boredom' (pp.43 f.).

Notes to pages 41-42.

11. Sands' thoughts here compare with Camus' comment in his Introduction to L'Homme Révolté, p.14. 'The final conclusion of the absurdist process is, in fact, the rejection of suicide, and persistence in the hopeless encounter between human questioning and the silence of the universe.'
12. There are clear comparisons here with the drama of Samuel Beckett, for example, Waiting For Godot, p.52:
 VLADIMIR: Tomorrow everything will be better.
 and in Waiting For Godot, p.69:
 ESTRAGON: We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?
 Cf. Sands' absurdist conversation with Harris, ending 'Something's bound to turn up' (TL p.122).
 See Samuel Beckett, Waiting For Godot (London: Faber, 1965).
13. L'Étranger, op.cit., p.77, especially, 'I realised that a man who'd only lived for a day could easily live for a hundred years in prison.'

Notes to pages 42-47.

14. L'Étranger, op.cit., for example, pp.101 f.,
104 and 108.
15. Anna Cichón discusses this aspect of existentialist philosophy as it affects Farrell's fiction. See her 'Politics, Ideology and Reality in J.G.Farrell's Early Fiction', op.cit.,pp.28-37.
16. Farrell in his notebooks described his character, Exmoore: His denomination fluctuates between Anglican and Roman Catholic . . . a clergyman with a taste for confessions.' See TCD MSS 9128-60, Notebook 30 (9155).
17. See Michael Prusse's discussion in his 'Tomorrow is Another Day'. The Fictions of James Gordon Farrell, op.cit.,p.50.
18. Anna Cichón discusses the influence of internal and external factors on the life of Man in her 'Politics, Ideology and Reality', op.cit., p.37.
19. See Albert Camus, La Peste, op.cit., pp.65,71. It is important to note that Farrell intended to use La Peste as a model or inspiration for his The Siege of Krishnapur. See also Lavinia Greacen, op.cit., p.271.

Notes to pages 48-55.

20. It is worth noting that Farrell frequently echoes the recurring references to oppressive heat in L'Étranger, especially those used in pp.21 (the funeral) and 54 ff. (the murder on the beach). See my Chapter 3, p.61 for further discussion.
21. Margaret Drabble, 'Things Fall Apart', op.cit., pp.182 and 179 respectively.
22. For a discussion on the influence of Lowry and Nabokov, see Ralph Crane & Jennifer Livett, op.cit., p.53 and Michael Prusse, op.cit., pp.58 ff.
23. As Michael Prusse points out, Camus' Le Mythe de Sisyphe investigates the discrepancy between absurd experience and rational thought. See his 'Tomorrow is Another Day', op.cit., pp.67 ff.
24. See the character, Simon Bowman in A Man From Elsewhere, p.57, already referred to in this chapter, p.37.
25. Ralph Crane & Jennifer Livett, op.cit., p.52.
26. Margaret Drabble, 'Things Fall Apart', op.cit., p.188.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

Notes to pages 60-65.

1. Colin Wilson, The Outsider (London: Victor Gollancz, 1956), pp.292 ff. Wilson also discusses Meursault in Chapter 2, 'World Without Values' which examines, specifically, 'L'Étranger'.
2. Farrell's notebooks suggest that he himself tended to be an outsider. See TCD MSS 9128-60, Notebook 29 (9154):

Sometimes constant contact with people seems to put me to sleep intellectually and emotionally - only when I'm by myself again do I waken up once more.
3. Joseph Conrad, The Secret Agent (London: Penguin, 1994), pp.19-39.
4. See Ronald Binns, op.cit., pp.13 ff., and Simon Caterson, op.cit., pp.46 f. for discussions on the influence of Conrad on the fiction of Farrell.
5. See Ronald Binns, op.cit., p.38 for reference to the similarity between the Sartre/Camus quarrel and the differences between Regan and Gerhardt.

Notes to pages 69-71.

6. The image of the fox in the snow derives from Richard Hughes' The Fox in the Attic (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961). This was the first novel in a proposed series entitled The Human Predicament. The quotation appears in TL p.67. Further fox-images occur on pp.48,117,128,142 and 173.

7. Farrell's private notes on characters in his novels includes one on Sands:

Sands does not believe in himself - in the image which other people believe in, but he uses it from time to time.

See TCD MSS 9128-60, Notebook 30 (9155).

8. Boris proclaims that 'hope is a lie' in A Girl in the Head, p.121. In Farrell's later novel, Troubles, it is noticeable that the Spencer twins who dog the Major's footsteps are named Faith and Charity - a conspicuous omission of Hope on Farrell's part, perhaps.

9. Margaret Drabble, op.cit., p.191, and Lawrence Bristow-Smith, 'Tomorrow is Another Day:

Notes to pages 71-80.

9. (contd.)

The Essential J.G.Farrell', Critical Quarterly 25.2 (1983), p.45.

10. Anna Cichón discusses the disillusionment springing from failure which, in turn, generates an enclosed imaginary world in Farrell's protagonists. See 'The Realm of Personality and History', op.cit., pp.29 f.

11. Ronald Binns, op.cit., would endorse this interpretation of the tree symbolism in the novel. See p.42.

12. For Farrell's relationships with Sandy Ellis, Carol Drisko, Bridget O'Toole et al., see Lavinia Greacen op.cit., pp.193-262.

Notes in Farrell's diaries on relationships with women are telling; for example:

August 24. Increasing isolation. Twice this week I've woken up after nightmarish dreams about being isolated and unloved . . . I still believe myself incapable of writing when living in close contact with someone, at least having the sort of unstable relationship that I normally have with girls.

See TCD MSS 9128-60, Folder 9155/64 -70, Diary, 1965.

Notes to pages 81-94.

13. See Ian Morrison, Malayan Postscript (London: Faber, 1942), p.37, and Giles Playfair, Singapore Goes Off the Air (London: Jarrolds, 1944), p.48. These commentators are not alone in their condemnation of British women living in the colonies. Wilfred Scawen Blunt held them responsible for at least 'half the bitter feelings' between the different races in India. His comment is to be found in Margaret Macmillan's Women of the Raj (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), p.62.
14. Dr. Baker in The Lung is the forerunner of all Farrell's fictional doctors, it could be argued. However, his portrayal is orthodox. Sane, sober, in his prime and still practising, he does not resemble Farrell's later characters.
15. E.V.Rieu's revised translation brings out these details vividly. See Homer, The Iliad (London: Penguin, 2003), pp.390 f.
16. Malcolm Dean, 'An Insight Job', Guardian, 1 September, 1973,, p.11.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

Notes to pages 96-112.

1. For discussions on the similarities between La Peste and The Siege of Krishnapur see Ronald Binns, op.cit., p.71 and Michael Prusse, op.cit., pp.133 and 151.
2. Anna Cichón, 'The Realm of Personality and History', op.cit., pp.18 ff., discusses the origins of the theme of futility in Farrell's early fiction.
3. Ronald Binns, op.cit., p.39.
4. See my Chapter 3, p.77.
5. Albert Camus, La Chute, op.cit., p.84: 'In certain cases carrying on, merely continuing, is superhuman.'
6. Michael Prusse, op.cit., pp.52 f.
7. See John Spurling, op.cit., pp.167 f., and Michael Prusse, op.cit., who comments briefly on p.5.
8. See my Chapter 2, p.48.

Notes to pages 116-118.

9. Michael Prusse, op.cit., demonstrates from the draft material held in Trinity College Library, Dublin (TCD MSS 9132/399), how Farrell himself struggled with this technique in A Girl in the Head. See p.64.
10. Anna Cichón, 'The Realm of Personality and History'. op.cit., p.21.
11. See, as chief examples, Ronald Binns, op.cit., pp.57.69 and 83; Crane & Livett, op.cit., pp. 43,72 and 141; Neil McEwan, op.cit., pp.131 and 148 f.; and Michael Prusse, op.cit., pp.109, 141 and 180 f.
12. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960). Farrell's intertextual reference here probably links with an episode in which Stephen turns into the lane to his house, noting the 'faint, sour stink of rotting cabbages' (p.162), and a later description; 'The lane behind the terrace was water-logged . . . he went down it slowly, choosing his

Notes to pages 118-119.

12. (contd.)

steps amid heaps of wet rubbish . . .'

(p.175).

It may also be worth pointing out that Farrell's use of Joyce's 'epiphany' at Dollymount (Portrait, p.171) is used, with a quotation from Botticelli's The Birth of Venus, for good measure, as Boris comes upon Inez bathing (AGITH pp.115 f.). But Farrell's description is punctuated with symptoms of physical discomfort: Boris' stomach rumbles; he wants to belch and urinate; and he fears that Inez will get cramp.

13. Michael Prusse, op.cit., discusses the prevalence of sickness in The Hill Station, on p.205. Diseases mentioned include a heart condition, T.B., tropical fever, a withered limb, rabid dog-bite and mental derangement.

14. Malcolm Lowry, Under the Volcano (London: Penguin, 2000). Further parenthetical reference will be made to this edition.

Notes to pages 119-129.

15. See my Chapter 1, p.8 for an initial outline of Lowry's influence on Farrell. Chris Ackerley makes a detailed comparison of the texts of Under the Volcano, The Lung and A Girl in the Head in 'A Fox in the Dungeon', op.cit.,pp.19-35.
16. See TCD MSS 9154, Notebook 29.
17. The central theme of McNab's difficulties in the face of fundamental challenges may be reflected in Farrell's note on a possible title for the novel, The Doctor of Confusion. See John Spurling's Introduction to The Hill Station, op.cit.,p.7.
18. Anna Cichón discusses the transience of life as perceived by Farrell's protagonists in 'The Realm of Personality and History', op.cit., pp.21 f.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

Notes to pages 142-147.

1. Camus' own preoccupation with this episode is indicated in a reference in La Peste published five years after L'Étranger:

. . . [T]he woman behind the counter started airing her views about the murder case which had created a stir in Algiers. A young commercial employee had killed an Algerian on a beach (LP p.55).

The woman's later comment about clapping 'all that scum in jail . . . ' compares closely with the barman in Luc's episode: 'Give the scum their independence and clear them out of the country . . . (AMFE p.162), suggesting that Farrell had noted Camus' reference in the later novel.

2. For detailed comparisons between Homer and the beach attack in A Man From Elsewhere, see my Chapter 3, pp.89 f.
3. See Lavinia Greacen, op. cit., p.21. For a full account of Farrell's relationship with Judy Mitchell, see her pp.104-106, 121-125 and 129-134.

Notes to pages 148-160.

4. See my Chapter 4, pp.120 f.
5. The complete Latin phrase should read: Agnus Dei qui tollis peccata mundi . . . , translating as 'Lamb of God, you who bear the sins of the world . . .'. Farrell has substituted the interrogative for the relative pronoun, quis for qui. This appears, without the question mark, to be an error. But one cannot rule out a deliberate ambiguity introduced by Farrell here to add another layer of meaning to this reflection on guilt.
6. See my Chapter 3, p.69. References to the fox in The Lung occur on pp. 138 and 173.
7. For a discussion of the influence of Lolita on A Girl in the Head, see Michael Prusse, op.cit., Chapter 3, 'Stepping Stones: Echoes of Lolita', pp.57-66.
8. See Fiona McPhail. 'Major and Majestic: J.G.Farrell's Troubles', in The Big House in Ireland ed. by Jacqueline Genet (Dingle: Brandon Books, 1991), pp.243-252.

Notes to page 163.

9. See A Memoir, Letters and Diary of the Rev. Henry S. Polehampton ed. by Rev. E.Polehampton and Rev. T.S.Polehampton (London: Richard Bentley, 1858), entry for June 30, 1856.
10. For a full account of the relationship between Farrell and the unnamed call-girl, see Lavinia Greacen, op.cit.,p.58.

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